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ABSTRACT

This report, a product of the Commission on Youth and America's Future, addresses the problem of the approximately 20 million 16- to 24-year-olds who are not likely to attend college. Although many youth without college education are successful, a large fraction are not and need help to succeed. However, the portrait of them as troubled and in trouble is belied by the fact that dropout and teenage pregnancy statistics have declined, drug use is declining, and most youth do have some kind of job. The American people should set as a public policy goal the improvement of employment and earning levels for those lacking a college education. The primary problem lies with the economy, and the paths for youth to enter it, rather than with the youth themselves. Schools should be improved to give youth a better first chance, yet education alone cannot compensate for the substantial changes in the labor market. Community institutions, with schools in the vanguard, should break down the barriers between school and work; a number of programs and policies that can do this are suggested. Federal funding should be increased, and programs--such as the Job Corps, local youth corps, and the armed forces--that provide "added chance" opportunities should be expanded. Lifelong learning programs should be extended to benefit the unemployed and the under-employed. Three appendices present an agenda for action with recommendations; summarize the ingredients of effective programs; and describe the study process of this report. (BJV)

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YOUTH AND AMERICA'S FUTURE:

THE WILLIAM T. GRANT FOUNDATION COMMISSION ON WORK, FAMILY AND CITIZENSHIP

When William Thomas Grant established the Grant Foundation in 1936, he sought a better understanding of the ways in which individuals adapt to the vicissitudes of life. Touched in his professional life by the importance of good human relationships, Mr. Grant wished to "help children develop what is in them" so they would better "enjoy all the good things the world has to offer them."

Fifty years later, recognizing the special needs of older adolescents in our changing society, the Foundation's Trustees established **Youth and America's Future** with much the same purpose: its charge is to evaluate current knowledge, stimulate new ideas, increase communication among researchers, practitioners and policymakers and, thus, to help our nation chart a better future for youth.

The Foundation's President, Robert J. Haggerty, M.D., has described the Commission's unique perspective:

> *"Against a rising chorus of legitimate concern about the many problems facing today's youth, the Foundation has initiated this Commission on Youth and America's Future to speak in a different voice. It will explore the strengths of America's young men and women, their families and the programs and community institutions that serve them. We adopt this approach not to diminish the importance of the problems that exist, but to learn the lessons of success. The Foundation is confident that this effort to look with renewed respect at youth, where it strides as well as where it stumbles, will help forge the links of understanding and mutual responsibility that make our democracy strong."*

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THE FORGOTTEN HALF: NON-COLLEGE YOUTH IN AMERICA

An Interim Report on the School-to-Work Transition

Youth and America's Future

The William T. Grant Foundation Commission on Work, Family and Citizenship

January 1988

A GUIDE TO THE READER

SUMMARY AND MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS leads off this report and is printed on gray paper.

CHAPTER 1: YOUTH: PARTNERS IN AMERICA'S FUTURE explains our perspective on young Americans and our rationale for the goals and priorities in public policy and private practice found throughout our study. This overview applies both to this Interim Report on the school-to-work transition among non-college-bound youth and to our final report on youth in the family and community to be published later this year.

CHAPTER 2: THE DECLINING ECONOMIC FORTUNES OF YOUNG AMERICANS describes the new economic realities which we believe make it more difficult than ever for young people to make a successful transition to self-sufficient family life or independent living.

The remainder of the report contains our analysis of ways, both old and new, to improve the school-to-work transition:

- **Chapter 3** discusses school-based options and the building of an effective first-chance system for all.
- **Chapter 4** details a variety of transitional devices to bridge the gap from school to work and, in particular, to tap the resources of the community, including the workplace.
- **Chapter 5** concerns added-chance employment training opportunities for youth who have not completed high school.
- **Chapter 6** explores the need for an effective, equal access lifelong learning system for all Americans.
- Finally, **Chapter 7** contains our case for additional public funding of proven programs for children and youth.

CONTENTS

SUMMARY AND MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 1: Youth: Partners in America's Future 9

- Adolescence—The Transition to Adulthood
- The Changing American Family
- Poverty
- Citizenship
- Conclusion

Chapter 2: The Declining Economic Fortunes of Young Americans 19

- Toward the American Dream
- The Unsteady Transition From School to Work: Blaming the Victim

Chapter 3: A Better First Chance: Improved Schooling 29

- Education: Big Payoffs—But Not Enough Ways to Succeed
- The Benefits of Wise Investment
- The Dropout Problem in Perspective
- Toward More Options in School Practices
- Alternative Instructional Methods

Chapter 4: Bridging the Gap From School to Work 39

- Improving the School-to-Work Transition for *All* Our Youth
- A Mix of Action Programs
- • Monitored Work Experience
    - Cooperative Education
    - Internships
    - Apprenticeship
    - Pre-Employment Training
    - Youth-Operated Enterprises
- • Community and Neighborhood Service
    - Individual Voluntary Service
    - Youth-Guided Services
- • Redirected Vocational Education
- • Incentives
    - Guaranteed Postsecondary and Continuing Education
    - Guaranteed Jobs
    - Guaranteed Training
- • Career Information and Counseling
    - Career Information Centers
    - Parents as Career Educators
    - Improved Counseling and Career Orientation
    - Community Mentors and Community-Based Organizations
- • School Volunteers
- On the Need for Paid Employment

Chapter 5: **An Added Chance** 59

The Growth of Knowledge About Effective Added-Chance Interventions
The Job Corps
State and Local Youth Corps
Non-Residential Pre-Employment Training
Strengthening the Job Training Partnership Act
A Role for the Armed Forces

Chapter 6: **Equal Access to Lifelong Learning** 67

Elements Already in Place
Options for Financing Recurrent Education
- Individual Training Accounts
- Education and Training as an Employee Benefit
- Community (or National) Service
- Individual Entitlements
- Enrollment Subsidies
- Expanded Work-Study Programs

A System of Lifelong Learning for *All* Citizens

Chapter 7: **Making it Happen: Increased Investments in Success** 73

The Costs of Neglect
The Public's Readiness to Invest in Children and Youth
Some Principles to Guide Increased Funding of Youth Programs
For a Fair Federal Share
The Uses of Added Federal Investments

Appendix A: **Agenda for Action: Enough for All to Share** 87

Appendix B: **On Effective Education and Remediation Programs for Youth** 93

Appendix C: **The Study Process of *Youth and America's Future*** 97

Publications of the Commission **(see inside back cover)**

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THE FORGOTTEN HALF: NON-COLLEGE YOUTH IN AMERICA

Summary and Major Recommendations

It has come to be an article of faith that a college education is the best route, and perhaps the only route, to success in America. From the time we are small children, we hear advice from parents and teachers that we should study hard and go to college. It is now simply assumed that leaders and professionals in education, industry, and government will have a college education.

Clearly, college experience is one of the best ways to develop one's talents. And, certainly, we know that college-going pays off handsomely in higher economic earnings for graduates (and even non-graduates.)

As important as these personal gains, however, is what college and university learning means for the future of American society. Without many more well-trained minds working toward the solution of a myriad of pressing economic and social problems, curbing the threat of nuclear annihilation, and innovating and implementing the technologies and services that alone can ensure prosperity, the future of this country is uncertain.

But a college degree is not the only way to develop the talents of tomorrow's workers. For some, it is far from the best. There are many opportunities outside the college classroom to develop skills and talents and many ways to contribute to a stronger America and to successful personal and family life that do not require a college degree.

This report calls attention to "The Forgotten Half," the approximately 20 million 16-24 year-olds who are not likely to embark upon undergraduate education. They finish their formal education when they leave high school, with or without a diploma. Yet, they, too, aspire to succeed, to find a niche in the workplace where they can make a living, raise a family, and earn respect in the community.

These young people face a series of high hurdles in their search for a rewarding career. Lacking a college credential, they are increasingly locked out of most high-salaried occupations. Moreover, stable, good-paying jobs which do not require advanced training are rapidly disappearing. Between 1979 and 1985, the United States suffered a net loss of 1.7 million manufacturing jobs.* A fast-changing economy has produced millions of new jobs in the service and retail sectors, but with wages at only half the level of a typical manufacturing job. Fields such as transportation, communications, utilities, government, and agriculture once offered steady employment to millions of young high school graduates, but no longer to the same degree. The plight of the "forgotten half," never easy, has become alarming. This nation may face a future divided not along lines of race or geography, but rather of education. A highly competitive, technological economy can offer prosperity to those with advanced skills, while the trend for those with less education is to scramble for unsteady, part-time, low-paying jobs.

Non-college youth need help in moving from school to a career, help that is often not available. Taxpayers, private donors, and parents gladly pay their share of the more than $10,000 per year cost of sending a student to college. They point with pride to their colleges and universities and voice their support for this public and private spending as an investment in the future. But for non-college-bound youth, no such spirit of pride spurs an equal investment in their future. For the most part, these young people are left to make it on their own.

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* Sources for all statistics contained in this summary may be found in the chapters which follow and in the Notes at the end of this report.

A DISTORTED IMAGE OF YOUTH

In our study thus far, the Commission has concluded that many of these non-college-bound young people *are* making it—by working in one or more jobs, by living at home with their parents, by delaying marriage and family, and by searching for extra training that can advance their careers. These are anything but "laid back," carefree youth without a thought for tomorrow.

Yet, what most Americans are familiar with are media images painting a picture of a troubled younger generation beset by drugs, crime, and teenage pregnancies. Such images suggest a generation on the skids, one which will not live up to the standards of the generations that have gone before.

The Commission believes that this portrait of a "troubled and irresponsible" younger generation is largely mistaken. Indeed, government statistics show the reverse. More students are staying in school longer, earning both high school diplomas and college degrees. Fewer are dropping out before earning their diplomas. More are employed, albeit in part-time jobs. Fewer young girls are becoming parents prematurely. Drug abuse, while still distressingly frequent, is less common than it was in the late 1970s. Crime and homicides are down somewhat from the highs of the past decade.

Here are some of the key numbers:

- The annual dropout rate nationwide fell from 6.3 percent in 1973 to 5.2 percent in 1983, a decline of almost one-fifth. When young adults ages 25-29 were surveyed, 86 percent had earned a high school diploma or its equivalent, twice the percentage of 1940.
- Twenty-two percent of all 25-29 year-olds have completed at least four years of college, nearly double the 1963 figure and quadruple the 1940 rate.
- The birth rate for young women ages 20-24 is less than half of what it was in 1960. Then 258 of 1,000 women in that age group had a child, compared with 107 per 1,000 in 1985. For teens ages 15-19, the birth rate has fallen from 89 per 1,000 in 1960 to 50.9 in 1985, a drop of 43 percent.
- The percentage of American youth ages 18-25 who said they used marijuana in the past month fell from 35 percent in 1979 to 22 percent in 1985. Among youth ages 12-17, the percentage who had recently used marijuana fell from 16.7 percent in 1979 to 12.3 percent in 1985.

The Commission believes that the common portrait of deeply troubled youth is not only misleading, but harmful in itself. We ought to correct the record out of a sense of fairness, as well as accuracy. These young people desperately need a chance to get started in responsible careers. Instead, they are frequently saddled with an image of being uninterested and unwilling to assume responsible adulthood. Complaining about the state of our youth is all too common; a genuine commitment to aiding non-college youth is rare.

THE DECLINING ECONOMIC FORTUNES OF YOUNG AMERICANS

While many youth without college education are successful, the Commission is concerned that a large fraction of them are finding it harder than ever to swim against an economic tide that is flowing against them. They are seeking jobs they cannot find. Their work, often on a part-time basis, earns too little to support themselves or a family. They are floundering in their efforts to find a place for themselves. And some are losing hope that they have much of a future.

Recent economic data tell part of the tale:

- In 1986, young males ages 20-24 who had high school diplomas and had jobs earned 28 percent less in constant dollars than the comparable group of youth in 1973. The income drop was 24 percent for whites and 44 percent for blacks.
- High school dropouts suffered an even larger income decline. Those 20-24 years old earned 42 percent less in 1986 in constant dollars than the same group in 1973.
- While earning power among working youth has declined, more of these young people also report no earnings. In 1984, 12 percent of all 20-24 year-old males said they had no earnings, up from 7.3 percent in 1973.
- Less than half of these young men, even when employed, earn enough to support a family of three above the poverty level. In 1985, 43.7 percent of all young males had incomes high enough to support a

three-person family above the poverty level. This represents a decline from about 60 percent in 1973.

- More young people are working in part-time rather than full-time jobs. The percentage of young male graduates under age 20 who were not in college and working full time fell from 73 percent in 1968 to 49 percent in 1986. Similarly, the percentage of young females who were not in college and working full time fell from 57 percent in 1968 to 42 percent in 1986.
- Of the 3.1 million family households headed by youth under age 25 in 1985, 30 percent had incomes below the poverty level, nearly double the rate of the early 1970s.

How can these youth be helped? Ultimately, we believe the American people should set as a conscious goal of public policy the improvement of employment and earning levels for all workers, not least those lacking college education. In this Interim Report, the Commission offers a series of recommendations and suggestions that can be implemented immediately, ranging from a somewhat different approach to school reform to an expanded investment in programs that help these young people move into the world of work. We lay out a series of measures to upgrade the American workforce. Better educated and more productive workers should be entitled to better compensation for their labor. While there is no absolute guarantee that this will follow, we support investments in human resources as the most basic and enduring strategy for creating prosperity.

We also explore ways in which a wide range of community institutions, acting in concert with the schools, can provide a more nurturing and responsive preparation for young people who choose other paths to achieve adult self-sufficiency. While focusing primarily on non-college youth, a number of our conclusions and recommendations apply to the needs of all young Americans, both those who attend college and those who do not.

A BETTER FIRST CHANCE

Part of the solution lies with our schools, but only part. Too often, any discussion of the problems of youth leads quickly to a bashing of the schools for failing to do their job. Most such attacks are unfair and unwarranted. Students may work hard through the 12 grades of school, may compile adequate records and may graduate in good standing, and their teachers may have effectively taught them the basic skills. Nevertheless, they are still likely to encounter problems in getting started in a productive career. *The primary problem lies with the economy, and the paths for youth to enter it, rather than with the youth themselves. Education can certainly help, but it is no cure-all for massive changes in the labor market.*

The school reform movement of the 1980s has encouraged schools to set higher standards for their students and for their teachers. High schools have been urged to require more academic study, to lengthen their school days, to test students more frequently, and to strive for excellence. The Commission agrees with many of these "reform reports" and, especially, with their focus on the importance of education itself.

However, we disagree in part with the thrust of some recommendations. In general, the school reform reports have focused their attention on college-bound students and urged a new effort to prepare them for higher education through standardization of school curriculum and practice. This course may be right for some and not right for others. For young people who have not fared well in school, a regimen of "more of the same" may result in less learning. Recent research in education has confirmed what most teachers already knew to be true: children learn in different ways. Some who do not absorb much from books and lectures do splendidly when they get a chance to work at their own pace or to learn through experience in "hands-on" kinds of activities. The education system rewards students who learn well through the conventional means of paper-and-pencil tasks, but it should not penalize young people who learn in other ways. Their skills and abilities may make them highly productive as adults, but they need help in getting started. Schools need to offer varied learning experiences that take advantage of the abilities of these students, not ignore them because they do not fit "the proper mold."

Research has also confirmed the high cost of failure in school. Young people with reading and mathematics scores in the bottom fifth compared to their peers in the top half are 8.8 times more likely to leave school without a diploma, 8.6 times more likely to have a child out of wedlock, 5 times more likely to have an income below the poverty line, 2.2 times more likely to have been arrested in the previous year. Mastery of basic skills clearly correlates with success in later life, even if it does not guarantee success.

With this in mind, the Commission

concludes that it makes good sense for society to invest heavily in efforts to strengthen the schools, to raise the level of basic learning, and to reduce dropout rates at the state level to 10 percent or less by the year 2000. Some proven programs, such as Chapter 1 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act, should be expanded to serve all eligible students, including those in the high schools. Chapter 1 funds pay for extra help for low-achieving students, and evaluations have found that these children clearly benefit from the extra attention. In other cases, our Interim Report recommends a more varied approach with all students to head off early failure. What all children learn should be challenging and substantive, but how they learn can vary with what works best for them.

States and communities should establish concrete school completion goals, youth employment goals, parental involvement goals, and youth community service goals. These goals should be publicly announced and monitored in annual community-school "report cards," along with achievement scores, college admission results, and other measures of school effectiveness. Specific guidelines should be developed to direct resources to those schools which fall seriously short of their completion goals, rather than leaving them to fail.

BRIDGING THE GAP FROM SCHOOL TO WORK

As for the upper grades, our Report recommends that community institutions, with schools in the vanguard, seek to break down the barriers between education and the world of work. For the student bound for higher education and a professional degree, the education system provides ladders from school to career. That, however, is the exception, not the rule. Most young people will step off the education ladder long before reaching the level of a professional career—with nowhere to step next. They are on their own in the search for work. This is not right or fair. These young people need some assistance, and educators, allied with employers and community leaders, can provide it by giving students opportunities to reach beyond school walls. By moving education into the community, educators not only tap rich learning possibilities, but also give youth the exposure and confidence they need to make it on their own.

State officials should also show more flexibility in allowing young people over age 18 to return to high school. We should encourage "dropping-in" as well as trying to prevent "dropping-out." Closer collaboration between secondary schools and community colleges, for example, would provide alternative settings for older returning students unlikely to function well in a regular high school classroom.

A number of school-to-work programs have been tried and tested nationwide. In general, these have been shown to both increase school achievement and foster graduates who are more mature, responsible, and motivated. No single program is best, but research and experience have convinced us that many such programs can achieve real results. Many thousands of young people who may drop out and face a troubled future can be salvaged by programs that give them a chance to get started in a productive job. The Commission suggests a number of approaches worth considering. They include the following:

- *Monitored Work Experience.* This category includes cooperative education, internships, apprenticeships, pre-employment training, and youth-operated enterprises. All of these efforts feature opportunities for students to gain work experience, to be exposed to adult supervisors and models in the workplace, and to relate their academic learning to the world of work. Apprenticeship programs merit special attention and possible expansion to many more American businesses.
- *Community and Neighborhood Service.* This includes individual voluntary service and youth-guided services. Young people need experience not only as workers but as citizens. Service programs not only expose young people to the adult world, but give them a sense of the obligations of citizenship in building a more caring, compassionate, and competent society. The experience of service to the community should be vigorously promoted as a third element as important as schooling and work.
- *Redirected Vocational Education.* The evidence indicates that, with a few exceptions, vocational education does not prepare young people adequately for *specific* jobs. But its hands-on methodology can offer students a valuable and effective way to acquire the basic skills and general abilities they will need to be successful in a wide range of endeavors.
- *Incentives.* Low motivation and low expectations for success in the workplace often limit students' educational achievement. Recent experiments with guarantees of postsecondary and continuing

education, guaranteed employment, and guaranteed training for students who do well show promise of encouraging young people to work hard and succeed in school. Such guarantees are much more likely to be successful if they are supported by personal adult attention to young people, whose daily lives in school and outside it are too often lacking in encouragement and frustrated by circumstances beyond their control.

- *Career Information and Counseling.* A variety of information and counseling approaches can expose young people to job opportunities and career options, as well as to successful adult models. These services can be offered both in schools and community settings. They include establishing career information centers, developing the capacity of parents as career educators, and expanding the work of community-based organizations of many kinds.
- *School Volunteers.* Tutoring is the most common form of school volunteer activity. However, adults are needed even more generally, as friends and mentors, for opening up career horizons, and for helping young people master the various dilemmas of living in a stressful time. Youth also volunteer as tutors, and research has found that peer tutoring is effective for the tutee, and even more for the tutor's mastery of subject matter.

Improving education, elevating skill levels, and providing "hands-on" experience are no cure-all but they will help. We agree with those who say America needs to "work smarter" and raise productivity in order to be competitive with other nations. But we believe something just as important is at stake. We must address the needs of our youth if we are to be fair and to retain the confidence of those we have brought up to believe in the promise of the American Dream.

Most young men and women understand that there is no firm guarantee that doing well in school will assure immediate rewards in the workplace. But if our young people have a responsibility to prepare themselves well for the demands of work and adulthood in the 21st century—and we believe they do—policymakers, employers, and community leaders have a corresponding obligation. They must concern themselves with not just the quantity but with the *quality of employment opportunities* for our young people. The half of our youth who do not go on to college have a right to be able to compete for jobs that are adequate in numbers, that offer reasonable wage levels, that provide health insurance and other essential benefits, that offer career advancement in return for diligence and competence, and that provide continuing educational opportunities and retraining benefits if they are displaced by technological change.

AN ADDED CHANCE

However, for most young people over age 18 who lack a diploma, more traditional schooling is not the answer. They may need our help—although not as much help in dollars as the state college student gets for four or more years. Therefore, the Commission recommends an expanded array of "added chance" opportunities for youth who are out of school and out of work. They include:

- The incorporation of intensive academic skills training in all employment training programs where they are not currently offered.
- *The Job Corps.* This intensive intervention, residential program has been rigorously evaluated and continuously fine-tuned. Though it is not for everyone, evaluations have found that the Job Corps increases earnings, enables its graduates to remain employed longer, helps many to go on to full-time study, and provides society a net return of $1.46 for every tax dollar invested.
- *State and local youth corps.* Currently 14 states and 12 cities operate year-round youth corps that incorporate various elements of the Job Corps experience. Other states and communities operate summer programs. An evaluation of the California Conservation Corps found that the work of Corps members generates a positive economic return without including in the calculation the value of likely changes in the future lives of Corps members.
- *Non-residential pre-employment training.* A number of national organizations specialize in offering pre-employment training and basic skills remediation. Their efforts deserve further encouragement and support.
- *The Job Training Partnership Act.* The Act's potential for serving at-risk youth has not been adequately realized. Only five percent of eligible youth are currently served. Moreover, the JTPA program tends to direct its efforts to the

young people who are easiest to reach, teach, and place quickly in jobs. With certain changes in its management practices, it could become much more effective in reaching the hardest to serve.

- *The Armed Forces*. Although only nine percent of all recruits lack a high school diploma, the proportion is likely to increase dramatically with the changing youth demographics. The Armed Forces should expand programs to upgrade the academic and work skills of its members to guarantee that none will return to civilian life without a high school equivalency education.

To obtain maximum effectiveness from added-chance programs, greater coordination is required among all agencies that serve youth. To this end, the Commission strongly recommends:

- That national, educational and other human service leaders—school boards, state commissioners of education, principals and superintendents, teachers and guidance counselors, health, welfare, and employment directors and their staffs—actively seek ways to participate in and learn from added-chance efforts which in so many cases have proven more effective for at-risk youth than traditional schooling.
- That state legislatures and governors take concerted action to bring together the full range of their state's health, social welfare, housing, employment, transportation, safety, and other human services so that education and employment training programs may be strengthened by the contributions of these essential services.

EQUAL ACCESS TO LIFELONG LEARNING

This nation's fast-changing economy has helped spur the creation of a variety of education and training programs geared to adults. Whether labeled "lifelong learning" or "recurrent education," these programs are giving adults a chance to improve their skills and enrich their lives. However, as beneficial as these programs are, they have largely by-passed the unemployed and under-employed blue-collar workers, who most need added training. Instead, most such learning programs are directed to adults who have some college training. The Commission believes this imbalance needs to be considered and remedied. A variety of proposals for correcting this imbalance has been offered. We recommend a serious national study of such proposals with the goal of developing an effective and equitable lifelong learning system for all our citizens.

INCREASED INVESTMENTS IN SUCCESS

There is no way that the forgotten half of American youth, especially those most at risk, can be adequately served at no additional cost. Although aware of government deficits and private indebtedness, the Commission concludes that as a nation we cannot afford *not* to invest more in our children and youth. For failure to act in this vital area costs far more in wasted lives, inadequately prepared workers, and social "safety net" programs to assist those who cannot earn an adequate income.

One researcher calculated that 973,000 dropouts from the nation's high school Class of 1981 will lose $228 billion in personal earnings over their lifetimes, while society will lose $68.4 billion in taxes. Similarly, the Committee for Economic Development concluded, "Every $1 spent on early prevention and intervention can save $4.74 in the costs of remedial education, welfare, and crime further down the road."

And the evidence shows that public investments do pay off. Health and nutrition programs result in healthier mothers and children and reduced medical costs. Programs like Head Start and Chapter 1 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act yield gains in educational achievement. Unfortunately, however, such programs reach only a fraction of those in need, and benefits often end before young people have consolidated their gains and made them permanent.

Public opinion polls indicate that Americans, in spite of the deficits, are willing to spend more on programs for youth. We do not, however, recommend new, top-down legislative mandates or rigidly prescribed look-alike programs. Local leadership must be able to innovate and constantly refine programs and practices to meet local conditions.

We note that while more than 30 states have recently increased taxes to maintain and increase social services, including a broad range of youth and educational programs, federal spending for such programs, when adjusted for inflation, has declined by a quarter or more. All levels of government must do more, but in particular the Commission recommends:

- That the federal government increase its present investment in children and youth by at least $5 billion in each of the next ten years.

- That fiscal responsibility requires provision for this expenditure by some combination of the following methods: increasing general tax rates, eliminating existing tax preferences, realigning domestic and military spending priorities, and considering a new dedicated tax for children and youth as a percentage surcharge on the personal income tax—an "Investment in America's Youth" surcharge.

However the funds are raised, they should be spent according to the following principles:

- They should be targeted primarily for the benefit of high-risk youth.
- They should supplement, not supplant, prior congressional appropriations.
- They should be made available with long-term assurances over a minimum ten-year period.
- Allocations of funds should be kept relatively constant among programs from year to year so as to assist state and local planning and effective implementation.
- They should be used to leverage additional state, local, and private matching effort, rather than carry the entire burden at the federal level.

Our study leads us to conclude that *a wide range of strategies already seem to be achieving results and hold even greater promise—if only they can be made more widely available than at present, and if they can be focused in a more coordinated and comprehensive fashion.* The Commission urges that the added funds be spread among proven but underfunded programs. Their actual allocation should be determined by Congress. Simply as an illustration, the funds might be used as follows:

- $1.5 billion added to Head Start would serve another 600,000 children; the program now serves 450,000, with about 81 percent of all eligible 3-5 year-olds remaining unserved.
- Another $1.5 billion added to Chapter 1's budget would serve an additional 2.5 million students. The program currently serves about 5 million children, about half of those who are eligible to receive this remedial help.
- The Job Corps now maintains 40,500 full-year training slots. Adding $300 million to the Job Corps could support 30-50 new centers and almost 19,000 additional full person-years of training.
- Adding $1.5 billion to the Job Training Partnership Act would serve up to 500,000 additional youth—those with the most severe deficits. The JTPA currently serves about 463,000 youths, estimated to be only five percent of the eligible youth population.
- A fund of $200 million would enable states and localities to expand a number of youth initiatives, such as community and neighborhood service, cooperative education, high school work-study, apprenticeship, youth-operated enterprises, and others.

We stress that the federal government has an important role in meeting the needs of our young people. However, even more significant steps must be taken by state and local governments and private agencies. Still more important than any of these, we see families, employers, and communities as the first line in helping our youth to grow into self-sufficient and responsible citizens. At all levels, we encourage approaches that do not do things *to* or *for* our young but, rather, *with* them. Their success requires that they be enabled and empowered, by *expanding their options*, to do more *for themselves, their families, and their communities.*

CONCLUSION: A NOTE OF URGENCY

The Commission believes that today's youth present the nation with reasons for optimism, as well as a challenge and an opportunity. Our future has no room for complacency. Today's young people are tomorrow's workers and citizens. We cannot afford to lose any of them. If a large percentage of our young people are left to flounder in low-paid, futureless jobs, we face a nation divided between the educated and prosperous and the uneducated and underemployed.

America's future prosperity depends on the energy, flexibility, and creativity of a well-trained workforce. During the baby boom years, employers were able to pick and choose the most employable young men and women from a very large pool of potential workers.

Today's demography presents a new situation. Far fewer young people are entering the labor market, and a much larger proportion come from poor and minority groups that have had only a limited chance to succeed. Therefore, employers have fewer workers to pick from, and a higher proportion of our youth must be prepared, at substantial expense, for more demanding work.

Youth today, especially those who do not go to college, find it increasingly difficult to match changing market demands. Their situation is complicated by international and domestic market changes, insufficient investment in education and training, and wrenching changes in family and community life. Unless there is substantial intervention, we can expect this shrinking labor pool to include a growing proportion of young people likely to be poor and at increased risk of school failure and related problems.

Moreover, the increasing complexity of today's world makes it more essential than in the past that we have an educated citizenry that can make intelligent political decisions. They must make decisions about whether or not to support policies relating to nuclear war and peace, environmental pollution, international economic policies, and the employment and consequences of sophisticated technologies.

Our economy, national security, and social cohesion face a precarious future if our nation fails to develop now the comprehensive policies and programs needed to help all youth. In developing these policies and program, it is crucial to recognize the growing gap between more fortunate youth and those with far fewer advantages.

No less important, our urgent attention is required for moral reasons. This Commission does not share the view that our society has suffered fundamental moral decay. We do believe that Americans almost palpably yearn to be reminded of what we believe in and to be given opportunities to work toward what most agree is right and good. Doing better for our youth because it is the right thing may not seem hard-nosed enough to convince adults to make the investments that youth—and our society—need. But unless we are motivated, at least in part, by our belief in young people and our sense of obligation to them, we risk losing more than we can ever hope to win.

TO SUM UP: We are shortchanging too many of our youth, and in the process, damaging our country's future. Sustained attention to the following 10 goals is required from parents, employers, trade unions, educators, churches, youth-serving agencies, community leaders, and local, state, and national authorities:

1. Helping Americans to understand the needs of youth in today's economy and society and to deal with youth primarily as a resource, rather than as a problem.
2. Offering responsible, better-paid jobs with a clear path of promotion to more youth substantially earlier in their working lives.
3. Making schools and other sources of learning more flexible, both in the ways they teach and in their organizational patterns, while preserving a challenging core of common learning.
4. Designing and installing in most communities an improved system of school-to-work transition, especially for non-college-bound youth.
5. Taking advantage of the extensive knowledge we now have of model programs that motivate young people and encourage school success.
6. Developing widespread opportunities for added-chance sources of learning to serve school dropouts, particularly by shifting the emphasis in Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs to the most disadvantaged youth.
7. Planning and launching a system of lifelong learning that, unlike present arrangements, is fair to non-college youth.
8. Expanding opportunities for youth to serve their community, with sponsorship from local, state, and private sources.
9. Emphasizing the need of youth for supportive adult relationships in the teenage years, when changes in both the economy and family tend to reduce such opportunities.
10. Enlisting the balanced participation of all potential sources of public and private funding to accomplish the above, and particularly adding at least $5 billion in each of the next ten years to expand successful federal programs, along with the tax provisions to pay for it.

Our conviction about these recommendations has been well-stated by President David Hamburg of the Carnegie Corporation of New York in a related context:

> *We'll never know as much as we like, as evaluations are difficult and can direct resources away from the strategies themselves, but we know enough to act and we can't afford not to act.*

This Interim Report recommends concrete actions to communities, families, employers, and governments that better serve America's youth. In so doing, these can also smooth our country's transition through the critical final years of this century and send it, confident and strong, into the next.

Chapter 1

Youth: Partners in America's Future

Complaining about the state of our youth is as popular as complaining about the weather or airline meals. Whether in casual conversations or in solemn pronouncements, you cannot go far wrong by suggesting that young people today are bad and getting worse all the time. The common portrait of today's youth suggests that they range from the irresponsible to the criminal. For adults with short memories, the young are an easy target—and always have been.

All of this might be safely ignored except for the fact that these stereotypes of the young are not merely wrong but damaging. The notion that today's is a troubled generation, a generation on the skids, is rebutted by a close look at the very statistics that are so often cited in casual conversation. In its analysis of America's youth, the Commission has found that the large majority of young people today are staying in school longer, working in one or more jobs to make ends meet, avoiding premature marriage and child rearing, moving away from addictive drugs, and striving to be successful in an intensively competitive economy. This is a generation of young people that deserves our respect and, in some cases, needs our assistance. They deserve neither the condemnation nor the benign neglect of older generations.

We believe it is urgent that the American public set aside the distorted lenses through which today's youth are too often viewed. An exaggerated and fundamentally false view of youth as feckless and irresponsible can, nevertheless, become a self-fulfilling prophecy. By not giving young people opportunities for responsible work and by not crediting the young for their struggles to get started, adults can condemn youth to a period of needless floundering that is damaging to them and a drag on our society.

As a nation, we simply do not expect our recent high school graduates to embark on real careers. On the contrary, we think of them as unready for the serious business of earning a living and supporting a family. We expect they will hop from one low-paying job to another, to mill around for a while until they "grow up." For the recent high school graduate, getting started today is especially difficult since millions of stable, good-paying jobs in manufacturing have disappeared. This is the real world that these youth face. Nonetheless, for adults, it is often far easier to blame the young for their shortcomings, or to blame the schools for failing them, than to accept the fact that our society has not built adequate bridges that can take young people from the world of schooling to the world of work as it is rapidly evolving.

In most of this report, we focus our attention on youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who are not enrolled in college. These young people have had inadequate attention in the recent debate over school reform. But first we begin with a statistical portrait of youth in general.[1]

- The number of American youth is shrinking dramatically. Between 1980 and 1996, our youth population—those between 15 and 24—is expected to fall 21 percent, from about 43 to 34 million. Young people as a percentage of the nation's population will also decline from 18.8 percent to 13 percent during the same period.
- Youth from minority backgrounds and from disadvantaged homes will make up a significantly larger percentage of the youth population in the next two

decades. Between 1980 and 2005, the number of black youth will rise slightly from 5.8 million to 6.4 million, while the number of Hispanic youth will double from 3.1 million to 6.2 million.

- Three of every four 16-24 year-olds worked for pay during 1985. Forty-one percent of high school students are in the labor force at least part of the school year. For teenagers, the median income was $1,893 for males and $1,796 for females. Among 20-24 year-olds, the median income was $8,629 for men and $6,155 for women. Minority youth who were employed reported even lower incomes.
- Ninety-four percent of non-student 22 year-old men and 78 percent of comparable women are gainfully employed.
- The school drop-out rate has been shrinking over the last decade, despite the fact that many urban high schools lose a staggering number of their students before graduation. According to Census Bureau tabulations, the annual school dropout rate* fell from 6.3 percent in 1973 to 5.2 percent in 1983. Among 16-17 year-olds in October 1985, 91.6 percent of whites, 91.7 of blacks, and 84.5 of Hispanics were enrolled in school.
- Educational attainment has risen substantially. Among persons who were 25-29 years old in 1984, 86 percent had received a high school diploma or the General Educational Development (GED) credential, up from less than 61 percent in 1960 and more than double the 1940 percentage. Meanwhile, nearly 22 percent of young adults said they had completed four or more years of college, up from 11 percent in 1960 and four times the 1940 figure.
- The number of teenage births has been falling steadily. Overall, the proportion of teens giving birth fell 45 percent from 1960 to 1984. There were 89 births per 1,000 girls ages 15-19 in 1960. In 1984, there were 51 per 1,000. Among women ages 20-24, the drop has been even sharper. The birth rates for these young women fell from 258 per 1,000 in 1960 to 107 in 1984, a 58 percent decline.
- Though fewer girls are having children, a greater number of these babies are born out of wedlock. In 1984, 19 out of 1,000 white teenage girls had babies out of wedlock, compared to a rate of 6.6 in 1960. For black teenagers, however, the rate has changed little. In 1984, 78 of 1,000 teenagers had babies when they were unmarried, compared to 76.5 in 1960.
- More young people are continuing to live at home with their parents. In 1985, six of 10 men between the ages of 18 and 24 were living at home, compared to 52 percent in 1960. Similarly, half of the women in this age group were at home, up from 35 percent in 1960.
- Drug abuse by youth peaked during the late 1970s and has diminished significantly since then. The percentage of young people ages 18-25 who reported having used marijuana in the previous month fell from 35 percent in 1979 to 21.9 percent in 1985. The percentage who said they had used cocaine recently fell from 9.3 percent to 7.7 percent. Younger teens reported similar declines.
- The suicide rate for youths rose steadily since World War II and hit 12.4 per 100,000 young people in 1979. It has remained near this level since then. However, the suicide rate among young people is one-third lower than that of older Americans. The homicide rate among young adults rose to 14.5 per 100,000 in 1979, but has drifted lower to 12 percent in the mid-1980s.
- Of 3.1 million families headed by a youth under age 25, 30 percent had money incomes below the poverty level in 1985. That compares with a poverty rate of 11.4 percent for all families.

What do these figures tell us about our future? Although we will have substantially fewer young people in the coming years, *most* of this youth generation will be better prepared to assume the responsibilities of workers, family members, and citizens than ever before. Some see a further cause for optimism because youth's reduced numbers may lessen the competition among them for rewarding jobs and may make the American Dream a reality for a larger proportion.

When disaggregated by race and ethnicity, the demographic picture becomes more complicated. Growing proportions of racial

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* The annual dropout rate is the percentage of all 14-24 year-olds in a given year who were enrolled in school in October of the prior year, but who were not enrolled in school one year later and did not have a high school diploma.

and ethnic minorities will radically alter the size, shape, and, preparation of America's future labor force. Among blacks, for example, the rate of population decrease is slower than among the general population. As a result, although there will be fewer black youths overall, their proportion in the total youth population will increase from 13.7 percent in 1980 to 15.2 percent in 1996.[2]

Educational attainment among blacks also has improved dramatically since the end of World War II. In fact, their gains have been more substantial than those among whites, while still lagging behind the general population. In 1984, 78.8 percent of black youth between the ages of 25-29 had completed high school, up almost seven-fold from only 11.6 percent in 1940. The proportion of black dropouts has decreased as well, from an estimated cumulative total** of 32 percent in 1973 to about 20 percent in 1983.

These national statistics, however, partially conceal the problems that many youth still face in finishing high school. Fifty-six percent of black youth live in central city areas where the dropout rate is far higher than the 20 percent national estimate in 1983. In addition, disproportionately high concentrations of poverty—in 1985, 43 percent of all black children 18 and under lived in poverty[3]—handicap many of these young people. Still, in 1985, 42 percent of black high school graduates went on to postsecondary education and 11.6 percent finished four or more years of college, a 725 percent increase since 1940. This is far less than the 21.9 percent completion rate among the general population but noteworthy, we think, given the obstacles they had to overcome.[4]

Among Hispanics, the trends are somewhat different.[5] The 1980 Census counted 3.2 million Hispanic 15-24 year-olds of whom 29 percent were foreign born with Spanish as their first language. Immigration and a rising birth rate will increase their proportion of the total youth population from 7.5 percent in 1980 to as much as 13 percent by 1996. By the year 2000, Hispanics will be the largest single minority in the general population. They are already one of the youngest, with a median age of 25 compared to the national median age of 30.

Educational attainment among Hispanics is far lower than in the general population. Language barriers, an estimated 50 percent adult functional illiteracy rate, and a 40 percent poverty rate among children and youth under age 18 all contribute to lagging educational attainment data such as these: 50.9 percent of all Hispanic adults over 25 in March of 1987 were high school graduates versus 75.6 percent for all adults. Among 18-24 year-olds, 70 percent of Hispanics and 86 percent of all youth had completed high school. In 1985, an estimated eight percent of Hispanics 25 years of age and older had completed four or more years of college compared with 21.9 percent (in 1984) for all Americans.

Many of the problems faced by blacks and Hispanics are shared by non-Hispanic whites who live in poverty. Because greater proportions of blacks and minorities are poor, the fact that most poor people are white often is forgotten. The barriers they face are no less formidable. In 1985, 68.6 percent of all 15-24 year-old young people living in poverty were white. Among poor white 18-21 year-olds, an estimated 78 percent were non-Hispanic. Of these, 41 percent had less than a high school diploma and fewer than 20 percent had one or more years of college study.[6]

South Asian immigrants, Native Americans, and Pacific Islanders add to this American profile. Taken together, these data sketch a rough outline of how our country is changing and what we can expect our population to look like in the not-so-distant future. We will be more racially and culturally diverse than ever before, with a rapidly growing Hispanic population. Within these groups will be substantial numbers of young people at serious risk of school failure and with a variety of other problems likely to impede a successful transition into adulthood. Because these young people also will comprise a growing proportion of our future labor force, the costs of their failure will be borne not only by themselves and their families but by society as a whole. Even though some argue that fewer numbers will mean less competition and more success for all, we are not convinced. The gravity of the problems, and the size of the youth cohort facing them, are too large. If our country is to grow and prosper, these potential failures must be prevented.

With growing diversity there is an even greater need to encourage participation in the political, economic, and social fabric of our society. The changes this will bring are not unprecedented, and past experience

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** The cumulative dropout rate is a summative measure of *all youth ages 14-24* who were enrolled in school in October of the prior year but who were not in school one year later and did not have a high school diploma.

should make them welcome. America has always been a nation of immigrants—a nation of minorities—struggling to enter the mainstream and enriching it by their many contributions.

Developmental and physical differences also affect the transition to adulthood and cut across racial, ethnic, and income lines. Approximately four million young people ages 15-24 are challenged by some sort of impairment—a permanent physical or psychological condition that limits their activities. One million are severely disabled. There is enormous variation in the kind and degree of their impairments and how they affect each person's transition to adulthood. People with disabilities share, with minorities and the poor, a pattern of reduced success in education and finding employment. Forty percent of them do not finish high school. Follow-up studies of high school graduates with disabilities show unemployment rates ranging between 30 and 50 percent. Many of those who do work hold only part-time jobs. The better news is that rates of college enrollment among the disabled are climbing steadily. In a 1985 survey of college freshman, 7.4 percent reported a disability, up from 2.6 percent in 1978.[7]

In many ways, the opportunities available to young people coming of age in today's world are different from those available to previous generations. As this report suggests, economic, social, and cultural changes have made the transition to adulthood more difficult for all young people. As parents, educators, businesspeople, policymakers, and researchers, we must not ignore these differences but understand them. The challenge is to work together to find new ways to build on the strengths embedded in the full spectrum of American youth, whatever their race and ethnicity, whatever their family fortunes, and whatever their personal difficulties.

ADOLESCENCE—THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

Some scholars argue the time of life called "adolescence" is an artifact of a changing economic system. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, people were expected to take on adult responsibilities at a fairly young age. Where subsistence agriculture is the staple of the economy, such practices still exist. But around the turn of the century, much-needed child labor laws were enacted to protect children from economic exploitation. In addition, as labor became more plentiful in relation to available work and as work demanded a better prepared labor force, young people were, in effect, declared surplus. Because we could not gainfully employ them, we developed an educational system both to teach them and, at least in part, to occupy their time outside the labor market. This custodial/learning and preparation period has grown longer and longer until, today, the youth-to-adulthood transition for many youth lasts well into their mid-twenties and longer. The percentage of 18-19 year-olds in high school increased from 39 percent to 51 percent for whites and from 35 percent to 44 percent for blacks between 1960 and 1985.[8] Between 1960 and 1983, the proportion of 18 and 19 year-old females who have ever been married has dropped from 32 percent to 15 percent for whites and from 31 percent to less than 3 percent for blacks.[9]

Biological changes have interacted with these cultural factors to establish the widest separation between biological and social maturation known in human history. In mid-19th century England, for example, the average age of menarche was 16 and one-half; it is currently 12 and one-half. There has been a similar trend among boys who now, on average, reach puberty at around 14.

Developmentally, adolescence provides a time of delay or "moratorium" during which the young can experiment with and prepare for adult roles without assuming the full range of adult responsibilities. Part-time and summer jobs expose young people to a variety of work situations and provide that primary badge of adult status—a paycheck. Most youth are able to save or spend it at their discretion, without the responsibility of paying for their basic needs. Dating also widens youth's horizons and allows them to move in and out of short-term relationships, learning more about themselves and preparing for more lasting commitments.

At its best, adolescence brings a loosening of parental constraints and an increase in a young person's rights and responsibilities, *without* a lessening of parental encouragement and support. For many individual teenagers, an expanding range of opportunities, experiences, and obligations, and the promise of increased rewards in the future, contribute to a growing sense of initiative and responsibility.

An overemphasis on the transitional aspects of adolescence, however, has led to a stereotyped view of young people as "pre-adults." **Youth are seen as in the process of "preparing for life" and not yet fully-equipped to participate in it. As a result, adults too easily overlook the young and underestimate not only their current needs for adult attention but also their enormous capacity to contribute at *this* stage of their lives.**

This overall emphasis on transition has

influenced its length as well. Some aspects of the transition to adulthood, particularly that of school-to-work and from part-time, temporary jobs to jobs that offer real career opportunities, can be extended far too long. This "floundering period" in which young people are limited to low-wage, low-status positions, in spite of their abilities, can discourage young people and make them more vulnerable to a variety of self-destructive behaviors. College, of course, provides an alternative occupational status during this transitional period. However, fully one-half of our young people are not able or do not wish to take advantage of the opportunity college offers. Other aspects of this transition—leaving school, moving into sexual activity and parenthood—too frequently are rushed, in part the result of youthful impatience, but also because of real problems and insufficient help and guidance in their solution. The negative aspects of this premature entry into adulthood can be just as isolating and even more permanently damaging.

Choices should be expanding for young people at this age. However, adults, perhaps worried that youth will not make the right choices, often limit young people's options. As parents and educators, we are willing to accept a wide spectrum of neurological, psychological, and cognitive differences among young children. Influenced by developmental theories and practices, we reward their individual traits and aptitudes. But as the young move into puberty and adolescence, our willingness to allow variation constricts. We have less understanding of the differences in learning styles and aptitudes that the young adult may display, and we are less skillful in adapting our institutions to serve them. We force adolescents into a narrow path of choice that is dominated by our expectation of academic performance in a particular mode. We base our expectations and our teaching styles on a regimented idea of how learning occurs, rewarding only those who are able to fit into this prescribed system. At the point when a young person is making choices about how to be a worker, a citizen, a "grown-up," we give them the least flexibility in choice of who to be and how to become. Later, in our attitudes toward adults, we are once again more accepting of individual variations. What we view as interesting or "eccentric" in adults, we discourage in adolescents. However, because we have narrowed the range of acceptable choices at just the time when young adults are preparing to make them, we risk discouraging a large number of young adults already unsure of themselves and their ability to make responsible and constructive decisions. Instead of feeling that they can contribute, they flounder and are set adrift.[10]

An exaggerated view of adolescence as a time of inherent crisis and turmoil also contributes to the difficulties of young people. From our own experience as adolescents, we all know these are not the easiest years. The "stress and storm" of adolescence was described in the first decades of the century by G. Stanley Hall, the father of adolescent psychology. Later, extensive research interest in delinquency led to the portrayals of adolescent rebellion popularized by James Dean and Marlon Brando in the 1950s. By the 1960s and 1970s, rebellion was no longer viewed as a behavior limited to individuals or even small groups but was assumed to have spawned an entire deviant "youth culture."

Part of this readiness to assume the worst about young people may have something to do with the short memories of adults. With only a little effort, most adults can recall behavior of their own that tried the patience—and even shocked—their elders. In matters of taste and manners, young people of every generation have seemed radically, sometimes unnervingly, different from adults, in how they look and act, in the music they enjoy, and in the hairstyles and clothing they favor.

But careful research indicates that young people's basic values differ very little from those of their parents.[11] It is a mistake to confuse most adolescents' enthusiasm for trying on new identities and enjoying moderate amounts of outrageous behavior with genuine hostility to parental and societal standards. Acting-out and boundary-testing are time-honored ways in which young people, beginning in infancy, move toward accepting, rather than rejecting, parental values. It does little good, and much disservice, to think of youth as a time of rebellion, crisis, pathology, deviation, even "social epidemic." Far better, and more accurate, is to see adolescence as a time of evaluation, decision-making and commitment, when young people begin to carve out their place in the world.[12] How successful they will be depends in large part on their access to a range of legitimate opportunities and to the ongoing support of adults who care about them.

All young people, even those who are doing well, have needs, and far too many have serious problems. Of our 28 million 10-17 year-olds, one in four is in jeopardy of suffering the negative effects of some combination of school failure, premature parenthood, substance abuse, crime, or delinquency. Of these, one in 10 is in dire straits.[13] If these young people are to become productive and self-sufficient adults, we must recognize that their problems have been caused at least as much by adult inattention and a lack of economic opportunity as by any inherent youthful rebelliousness or pathology of dependency. To hold those whose problems are real, pressing, and immediate wholly responsible for their difficulties is to damn them twice. Blaming the victim creates neither opportunities nor motivates responsibility. It only damages self-esteem and builds a sense of failure and futility.

Adult perceptions about young people shape how we treat them, what we expect of them, and how they feel about themselves. This last is crucial because self-esteem and success are so intimately related.[14] ***Adults must begin to see young people as defined by their strengths rather than limited by their weaknesses.*** **Through that lens, we can better accept the young as genuine partners in creating America's future.**

We need to combat the national tendency to treat adolescence as a "temporary aberration" and the process of becoming an adult as a set of problems meriting attention only after they have reached crisis proportions. Public policy, as well as the policies and attitudes of employers, parents, and teachers, must begin to pay closer attention to the many, very normal needs of our adolescents. If our young people are to succeed, they must believe in themselves, and we must believe in them. Our policies must reflect respect and confidence in their developing abilities, encourage their responsible participation, and provide continuing adult support. Policies must be designed not only to remediate those whom we have too-long ignored—half-expecting them to fail or insisting they "make it on their own"—but also *to* ***provide all young people with many more ways to succeed than the limited number of options now open to the non-college-bound.***

THE CHANGING AMERICAN FAMILY

Changing family forms also have affected young people's transition to adulthood. These changes have affected youth's relationships with adults, whose important role as models for youth has been substantially altered. For the most part, these changes have not occurred in isolation from larger economic shifts; instead, they reflect them. Whatever else can be said about the twin increase in single-parent families and the rise of working mothers, we can safely assume these changes are here for the foreseeable future.

SINGLE-PARENT HOUSEHOLDS

The rise of single-parent families through divorce and out-of-wedlock births is a major change in family organization. Recent estimates show the number of single-parent families formed between 1975 and 1990 will nearly equal the number of married-couple families with children formed during the same period.[15] In addition, there has been a dramatic increase in marital separation and divorce, which has further contributed to women's participation in the labor force. Most of these families will be headed by working mothers. In 1984, almost 74 percent of divorced or separated women with children were working or seeking employment outside the home.[16]

What effect has the rise of single-parent families had on young people and on their transition to adulthood? Clearly, separation from the absent parent takes its toll emotionally and financially on all members of the family, and young people can be hit especially hard. But there are no simple answers. Some observers argue that the rise of female-headed families and the increasing participation of mothers in the workforce have steadily eroded the overall well-being of our youth. Measuring well-being in economic terms, it seems easy to conclude that the critics have made their case. Three statistics show that poverty is a growing reality in single-parent families:[17]

- The number of persons below the poverty line living in families headed by a women with no husband present jumped 27.1 percent between 1979 and 1986, from 9.4 million to 11.9 million.
- In March, 1985, 67.8 percent of single mothers with school-age children were in the labor force at least part-time or part-year.[18]
- A single parent working at the minimum wage of $3.35 per hour would have to support herself and two children at 20 percent *below* the current official poverty line ($8,737 per year for a family of three).

But another statistic is even more startling: while the number of individuals in poverty increased 27.1 percent among single-parent families, among other households, *composed almost entirely of married couples*, poverty soared 21.3 percent between 1979 and 1986, from 10.5 million to 12.8 million individuals.[19]

We view these numbers as a yellow light, cautioning us not to jump to obvious conclusions. Single-parent families, and the young people who grow up in them, face special strains and challenges, not the least of which are economic. But it is too simple to attribute the increase in children's poverty solely, or even primarily, to family break-up and to the corresponding rise in female-headed households. As we shall demonstrate in the next chapter, recurrent recessions, weak economic growth, and a downward trend in the real income of young and middle-aged adults have played an even more serious role.[20]

Recent research supports the view that among long-term, chronically poor single-parent families, the break-up of the family is largely a consequence rather than a cause of their persistent poverty. In a 1985 study, W.T. Grant Commissioner Mary Jo Bane found that black female-headed households are much more likely to form from households that already are poor. In spite of the dramatic rise in black female-headed households and the feminization of black poverty, one cannot safely conclude that much of the poverty could have been avoided if the families had stayed together.[21]

Have single parent families harmed young people or increased their anti-social behavior? A recent study by Robert Sampson examined race-specific rates of robbery and homicide in over 150 U.S. cities during 1980. Among both black and white juveniles, family disruption showed a strong effect on increasing crime rates. Focusing on blacks, Sampson found that the scarcity of employed black men increased the prevalence of families headed by females. Rather than positing a simple cause and effect relationship, the study concluded that criminal behavior among young blacks appears to stem from a set of structural links among unemployment, economic deprivation, and the family disruption that often follows.[22]

We do not dispute that children and youth in single-parent families are often at serious emotional and financial risk. However, **it is crucial to remember that unemployment and low wages have had debilitating effects on *all* children, in married-couple as well as single-parent families.**

WORKING MOTHERS

The modern increase in employment among mothers of school-age children began in the 1940s and is hardly a new phenomenon. A more recent trend, beginning in the 1960s, has been toward an increasing rate of maternal employment throughout the childbearing years.[23] In 1984, nearly 52 percent of married women with pre-school children were working outside the home or actively seeking work, compared with less than 19 percent in 1960.[24]

Our Commission views women's greater participation and influence in the world of work as a predominantly positive change, if for no other reason than that families clearly depend on their wages. One-fourth of children in married-couple families would be poor if they were reliant only on their fathers' income. When mothers' earnings also are counted, the poverty rate among these children is reduced by 30 percent. Recent data show that the median income of all married couples in which the wife works outside the home is 47 percent higher than in married couples in which the wife does not. Among minorities, the gain is substantially larger: 98.4 percent for blacks and 60.9 percent among Hispanic families. Two-earner families also enjoy greater protection from the ups and downs of the business cycle.[25]

But these benefits are not without costs. The additional responsibilities of work outside the home have made it nearly impossible for all but the mythic "Supermom" to meet the dual demands of both working and mothering—although the efforts of most to do so are nothing short of heroic. Fathers who are being asked to share housework and childcare in ways their own fathers never were feel the changes, too. A small but increasing number accept these additional responsibilities and appreciate the chances they offer to participate more directly in the day-to-day care of their children.

Working mothers spend less time with their children—and their neighbors' children—than they used to. What effect does this absence have on children in general and on older adolescents in particular? More than likely, the effects are as diverse as the young people and the families they live in. No doubt they depend on a mix of factors: whether they live with one parent or two, their relationship with both and their age and sex. Parents' occupational status and income, working schedule, proximity to the workplace, and the stress and satisfaction they feel on the job also are important factors. So, too, are the degree of family cooperation, access to community services, and flexible policies at work and at school.[26]

One very important variable, we think, is how children and young people themselves feel about working mothers. Do they feel abandoned, or do they feel secure in the knowledge their parent is away from home and working to take care of them? We will explore these and other issues related to the family more fully in the next stage in the Commission's work.

We already are convinced, however, that individuals and institutions beyond the family—friends, neighbors, employers, schools, and churches as well as governments—have pivotal roles to play in adjusting the opportunities of youth to changing family forms and in helping our youth participate constructively in society.

In some ways this argument might seem to break with precedent. In our legal tradition,[27] parents are assumed to be responsible for their children and, for the most part, retain primary control over them. The adult community, in one-to-one relationships as well as in its public policy, tends to avoid interfering in the parent-child responsibility unless the parents are unable or refuse to care for the child or until a law has been broken.

We recognize that the autonomy and independence accorded to individuals by the Constitution and, by extension, to the parent-child relationship, is a cornerstone of our public policy and private practice. Regardless of how the structure of families may have changed, parents retain primary responsibility for their children. But, just as no man is an island, neither is any family. The same give and take that marks healthy relationships among individuals must increasingly come into play between the family and community institutions, including schools and the workplace. This involvement should not diminish parental responsibility or stand in lieu of it, but rather it should be designed to enable parents to meet their obligations to their children more fully and actively.

POVERTY

Whether one is poor with one parent or with two, the realities of poverty are harsh. Of all poor people, approximately 57 percent are non-Hispanic whites. Forty-three percent of all poor people live in families headed by either married couples or men. Thirty-five percent live in families headed by single mothers.[28] Black and Hispanic children and those living in single-parent households are, however, far more likely to be poor. The proportion of children and youth living in poverty households, regardless of whether headed by a single parent or a married couple, has increased almost yearly for more than a decade.

Poverty—not minority status alone, or having a working mother, or coming from a single parent family—is highly correlated with school failure. Although black and Hispanic teens are more likely than whites to drop out, when students from the *same* socio-economic situation are compared, blacks, Hispanics and whites are almost equally as likely to be enrolled in school.[29]

Poverty and low school achievement also correspond with high teen pregnancy and birth rates. Disadvantaged students, regardless of sex or race, who do not do well in school tend to begin sexual activity at earlier ages.[30] Overall, the birth rate among all young women is decreasing, including that of 15-19 year-olds. The birth rate among young *unmarried* women, however, has risen steadily since 1950. Within this rising trend, black out-of-wedlock birth rates are *down* (about one-tenth from 1970 for teens and nearly one-fifth for 20-24 year-olds), although the proportion of out-of-wedlock births is much higher for black women than it is for whites.[31]

Marriage rates also are declining (down 46 percent between 1974 and 1985 for all 20-24 year-olds). Among blacks in this age group, marriage rates have fallen even more drastically—a full 62 percent during the same years.[32] As reported in *The State of the Child: 1985*:

> Before 1960, less than 14 percent of the children born to teenagers were to mothers who were unmarried at the time of the child's birth. By 1970, the proportion of out-of-wedlock births to teenagers had risen to 40 percent. In 1983, the proportion stood at 66 percent. The increase in the percentage of children born to unmarried teens is equally striking for whites as well as blacks. Before 1960, less than ten percent of white children born to teenagers were to unmarried mothers and in 1983 the percentage was 45.5 percent. Among blacks, the comparable figure before 1960 was less than 40 percent. Today virtually no black teenage mothers are married at the time of delivery.[33]

Declining marriage rates reflect the impact of worsening employment and earnings for virtually all males. Between 1973 and 1985, the mean incomes of all young men ages 20-24 declined 26.2 percent. Among blacks in the same age group, mean incomes fell 41.8 percent. Even worse, in these same years, mean earnings among 20-24 year-old black males without a high school diploma plummeted 56.3 percent."[34]

At every level of eduction, not just among dropouts, black youth experience higher unemployment and lower earnings than whites. Although cumulative high school completion rates for black young adults have risen dramatically—from 11.6 percent in 1940 to 78.8 percent in 1984—the unemployment rate for black high school *graduates* in October 1986 was one-fifth higher than the rate for white high school *dropouts*. In fact, despite increasing black high school completion rates, the gap in jobless rates between young black and white workers has never been greater.[35] Is it surprising that a savvy tenth grader, observing the experience of his older brothers and friends, should wonder what sense it makes for him to buy into the goal of school completion if he will face the same disappointing prospects after graduation?

What are we to make of these simultaneous trends? We are impressed with the increasing body of evidence suggesting that *among blacks, at least, a shrinking pool of marriageable men, financially able to support and care for a family, has increased the tendency toward single-parent families.*[36] One reason for this relationship may be that growing numbers of young women see little wisdom in deferring children and family until their potential husbands are financially able to support a family; many suspect that day will never come. At the same time, they see no advantage in legalizing current relationships without the expectation of future economic advantage and with every likelihood of additional burden. Rather than forgo families, many choose to forgo marriage instead.

Poverty can hurry young persons into adulthood long before they are ready to assume its responsibilities. Without the financial means or the social supports to create real alternatives, too many young people living in poverty back into destructive decisions, sometimes in reaction to a sense of futility and limited options. Some of these choices and their consequences, however, may be as much the result of insufficient adult guidance as a failure of hope. (It is estimated, for example, that roughly 75 percent of all teenage pregnancies are unplanned and result from failure to use contraceptives rather than from any desire to become pregnant.[37])

Whatever the cause, choices of this magnitude catapult young people into a world of adult responsibility with very few supports, at great cost to themselves and others. Three-fourths of families headed by women under 25 years of age were living in poverty in 1985.[38] Other decisions—going for the "easy money" to be made selling drugs or the self-destructive escape of addiction—further guarantee a life outside the mainstream of society and its rewards. If the problem of adolescence is sometimes seen as an artificially delayed adulthood, the situation for young people in poverty is often the reverse: choices made and responsibilities imposed far too early.

Are the problems of poverty so great that young people inevitably are overwhelmed and defeated by them? Would it be irrational for some young people in poor families to find it hard to believe wholeheartedly in the American Dream when they so often face few rewards and less support?

We have much more to learn about the effects of poverty on the transition to adulthood before we can presume to speak for impoverished youth. One major study which followed a group of predominantly inner city, black, teenage mothers for 17 years after their first pregnancy, found enormous diversity in the life patterns of these mothers and their children. Thirty percent had some postsecondary education and five percent had completed college. More than two-thirds were currently employed and most had been working several years, earning between $10,000 and $20,000 annually. One-quarter of the mothers studied had incomes that placed them squarely in the middle class.[39]

This Commission has learned a great deal about the enormous resilience and determination of our young. There are countless examples of young people who succeed, seemingly against all odds. Recent research has begun to look at the factors that protect some children and youth from suffering the negative consequences of events and behaviors that put them at very high risk. In a variety of studies, a triad of protective factors consistently appears: 1) positive personality dispositions, 2) a supportive family milieu, 3) an external system of support from peers, older friends, ministers, and teachers who can strengthen and reinforce the youth's own coping efforts.[40]

While children whose families must contend with long-term economic distress are at greater risk than those who are more advantaged, we reject the assumption that young people whose lives have been circumscribed by poverty *must* fail. Instead, we conclude that America must increase its investment in the talent and potential that exists in all our youth and in creative efforts to improve the ability of families, other adults, and community institutions to provide the care and attention they need so that they will *not* fail.

More than changes in the economy, in social roles, and in family structures have complicated the transition to adulthood. Rapid advances in telecommunications and the targeting of youth as a lucrative consumer market also have played a part. These forces shape young people's views of the world and influence their beliefs and actions.

Much of what young people see and hear on television, in films, videos, music, and advertising sends them messages about how they should behave as individual young men and women, as workers, friends, family members, and as sexual beings. Frequently, they receive distorted signals that conflict with what they have been taught and often with what they feel. The result is to confuse doubly this inherently difficult period.

When all is said, we are left with the simple fact that coming of age in America poses great challenges, especially to the poor and the non-college bound. If our young people are to move into adulthood successfully, they will require much from us who already are there. The expanding diversity of their numbers demands that we attend to their many differences and provide the choices and range of supports their variation requires. Rather than diminish the challenges of entering adulthood, their decreasing numbers will set them in bold relief. Our economic, social, and moral future will depend on our ability to recognize these difficulties and respond to them.

CITIZENSHIP

Contrary to conventional wisdom, we believe that the transition to adulthood entails more than a simple movement from physical dependence to independence. Maturity is not achieved by learning how to survive without the help of others. **Maturity is learning how to live *interdependently*, in partnership and reciprocity with other members of the community.**

We know that taking on new roles as employees, spouses, parents, and citizens is not easy and that learning how to participate fully in the give and take of social life—balancing obligations to oneself as well as to others—can take years to learn.

Learning that life's give and take is seldom 50-50 and should always be measured as much by compassion as by justice is the lesson of maturity. As we move from childhood to adolescence, through adulthood, and into old age, we continuously knit and re-shape the relationships between ourselves and others that create the communities in which we live. What we need and what we can give others changes but we always remain interdependent.

Interdependence is also a main ingredient of the kind of citizenship this Commission wishes to encourage. In our view, citizenship is more than a set of rights and responsibilities—to vote, to pay taxes, to serve our country and community when called. It is more than the beliefs that inform and protect our liberties. **Citizenship is an active exercise. It is fueled not only by *freedom from* coercion but by the twin *freedom to* participate in the institutions of government and society. It is, at heart, a give-and-take relationship built on rights and obligations,** tempered with charity and an abiding belief in the vast potential of the human spirit and the cooperative enterprise.

Young people learn about civic interdependence with varying degrees of success. Their participation in society and their lives as citizens are shaped by their opportunities, in childhood and adolescence, to make a difference in their own lives and in the world around them. Adults have an obligation to help them learn how to believe in themselves and in our human capacity to work together, creating what Aristotle called the "good life."

CONCLUSION

And what should we expect from youth in return? It would be easy enough to assume they will reciprocate with their unquestioning belief in us, in our institutions, and in our values. Easy perhaps, but surely disappointing, because this generation, as diverse as any we have ever known, will put its special stamp on our society as every other generation before it has done. Today's youth certainly will not reproduce our society exactly as we know it. Instead, if they are successful, they will find ways in a changing world to strengthen our institutions, to protect the values Americans hold most dear, and to adapt our society to new challenges, now unforeseen.

We must not fear these changes. Rather we must face them with an abundance of faith and everyday common sense. *We must do more than believe in our young people; we must invest in them as well.* Their investment in America already has begun. Their contributions have been real if only we would recognize them. Their promise is genuine if only we would lend it our support. It is time to join with our youth as partners, to encourage and affirm their belief in America and its dreams—and our belief in them.

Chapter 2

The Declining Economic Fortunes of Young Americans

It is hardly a secret to most Americans that our economy is in trouble. How deep the trouble and what the causes are subjects of endless dispute. We do not wish to enter the controversy surrounding our economy. Yet, it is impossible to address the status and condition of American youth, and their prospects for responsible participation in society, without looking briefly at the economic context in which today's young people come of age.

We contend that hand-in-hand with a faulty set of assumptions about the alleged irresponsibility of young people is a second set of flawed assumptions: That the American economy has enough full-time employment for all who want it; that remuneration for this work is sufficient to support decent living standards for American families and for independent living; that if our children and youth were all successful in school they would find good jobs; and that if people only would "apply themselves properly," they would be successful in life.

As we read the data, the new reality of American economic life for many of our fellow citizens is quite different. Young people who finish their education today with less than a college degree face harsh realities in the economy. Stable, high wage employment in manufacturing, communications, transportation, utilities, and forestry that was once open to young people leaving high school is rapidly declining. For male high school graduates under age 20, employment in these high wage sectors fell remarkably, from 57 percent in 1968 to 36 percent in 1986. In manufacturing alone, employment for under-age 20 male graduates fell by half, from 44 to 22 percent.[1]

To be sure, millions of new jobs have been created in recent years, predominantly in the retail trade and service sectors. The jury is still out, however, on whether careers in these growing fields can ever equal the earning power of the jobs that were lost in our declining basic industries. Currently, it takes two retail sector jobs to equal the wages of one lost manufacturing job. In April 1987, construction workers (all ages, both sexes) earned an average weekly wage of $473; manufacturing workers, $399; and retail trade positions, only $178. For young male high school graduates, employment in the retail trades and services now provides 48 percent of their jobs, up from only 30 percent in 1968. More to the point, 85 percent of the declining group of young male workers in manufacturing, were employed full time in March 1986, while only half of their counterparts in the growing retail trades were working full time. For young people competing at the bottom end of the economic scale, these are devastating developments.

The harsh new realities facing the young are disguised in large part by a growth in the overall economy and the creation of millions of service sector jobs. But a close examination of the economic data reveals that real median income of young male workers has plummeted by about one-fourth in just over a decade. At the same time, poverty rates for young heads of households have doubled.

The following figures seem to us telling:

- During the 26 years from 1947-1973, labor productivity* grew by almost three percent annually. But over the next 13 years, nonfarm productivity growth fell to under one percentage point a year and real wage growth for many workers stagnated or even declined.
- During the 26 years from 1947-1973, American families' purchasing power *doubled* (in 1984 dollars, from $14,095 to $28,167). Over the ensuing 13 years of relative economic stagnation, however, median family income (in 1984 purchasing power) actually declined by $262 to $27,905 in 1986. In other words, **by 1986, American family income had still not recovered to its 1973 level.**
- Family poverty rates, (excluding noncash benefits), which had been cut more than half between 1959 and 1973 (from 18.5 percent to 8.8 percent), rose after 1973 to a high of 12.3 percent in 1983 and then fell to the 1986 level of 10.9 percent—still 24 percent higher than their 1973 level.
- The percentage of our rural population living in poverty grew from 13.8 percent in 1979 to 18.3 percent in 1985, an increase of almost one-third. Inner city poverty rates have grown even faster. For example, the number of poor individuals in poverty areas in central cities (i.e., census tracts with a poverty rate of at least 20 percent) almost doubled between 1974 and 1985 (from 4.1 million to 7.8 million.)[2]
- Among families headed by a person under 25, the poverty rate almost doubled from 1973 to 1985, from 15.9 to 30.2 percent. The poverty rate of young white families doubled from 11.7 to 24.7 percent, while the rate for young black families also rose markedly, from 42.9 percent in 1973 to 62.1 percent in 1985.
- Income inequality also has worsened, as shown in a July 1987 Census report. The poorest fifth of all households, which in 1970 received 4.1 percent of all income, by 1986 was receiving only 3.8 percent. The poorest 40 percent of all households received only 15.4 percent of 1986 income—an all-time low. The middle three-fifths also declined from 52.7 to 50.2 percent of total household income between 1973 and 1985. On the other hand, the top fifth of households increased its share of income to 46.1 percent, an all-time high. This top fifth of the nation's households received an estimated $40 billion more in 1986 than it would have if its share of total family income had remained the same as it was in 1980. Stated another way, **the gap between our wealthiest and our poorest citizens is now larger than at any time since such data were first collected in 1947.**[3]
- At the same time that real earnings were declining, our Gross National Product grew at 3 percent annually since 1973, three times our population growth, thus permitting real GNP per capita to expand substantially.

This paradox of *a growing economy amid declining real earnings* is best explained by Gordon Berlin of the Ford Foundation and Andrew M. Sum of Northeastern University:

> *Part of the answer lies in the ingenuity of the American people. They kept their standard of living up even while individual real wages were falling by doing the following four things: They postponed marriage, both [potential] spouses entered the labor market, they had fewer children, and they went into debt. With two or more people working per family and fewer children, families could maintain a high standard of living, even though the real earnings of the family's primary wage earner were declining.*[4]

Coping strategies like these cannot be repeated, however. Once both partners in a two-parent family are working and once children are postponed or reduced in number, little can be done to maintain living standards in the absence of a rise in real wages. And that, we believe the data demonstrate, is not happening for most American families. Among those most exposed to the ill effects of declining earnings, none are more at risk than children and youth.

If we focus only on the situation of young male workers, we find that those ages 20-24 experienced larger relative earnings declines than all other groups of older males. In fact, these young workers' real mean earnings in 1986 were *fully one-quarter less ($8,859) than the identical age group earned 13 years earlier ($11,939, in 1985 dollars).*

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* growth of output per hour in the private business sector

Reality is actually somewhat worse than the figures cited because these earnings figures have been influenced by the growing number of males with no reported earnings: 7.3 percent of 20-24 year-old males in 1973 rising to 12 percent in 1984. Black male high school dropouts fared the worst: 14.2 percent reported no earnings in 1973 compared to 43 percent in 1984—a rise of 200 percent.

It is well documented that earnings are highly correlated to levels of educational attainment (the last grade of schooling completed). Regardless of race or ethnicity, the more years spent in education, the greater the annual earnings. Full-time, year-round male workers, 25 years old and over, who had not completed high school earned a median income of $18,881 in 1985; high school graduates earned $23,853; college graduates earned $32,822; and those with professional training requiring five or more years of college, $39,335. Earnings for women workers at these same levels of educational attainment were substantially lower: $11,836; $15,481; $21,389; and $25,928, respectively.[5]

Far less understood is the fact that ***advances in educational attainment cannot compensate for the deterioration in real earnings of young workers that have characterized the American economy since 1973.*** The more years of education completed, the better off economically one is likely to be. However, ***virtually all young male workers, despite their educational achievements, are, on average, far worse off than they were a decade ago and minorities are substantially worse off than whites.*** The point is demonstrated dramatically in the following table:

TABLE 1

Trends in the Real Mean Annual Earnings of 20-24 Year-Old Civilian Males, 1973 to 1986, by Educational Attainment* and Race/Ethnic Group

(in 1985 dollars)

	All Males (20-24)		% Change in Earnings 1973-1986			
	1973	1986	All	White (Non-Hispanic)	Black	Hispanic
All Males	$11,939	$ 8,859	−25.8	−20.1	−46.1	−29.1
Dropouts	11,595	6,725	−42.1	−42.4	−60.6	−27.3
High School Graduates	14,937	10,720	−28.3	−24.4	−43.8	−34.5
Some College	12,864	10,756	−16.4	−11.4	−42.7	−21.2
College Graduates	14,357	13,502	− 6.0	− 5.6	+ 6.5	N.A.

* **Note:** Earnings data pertain only to those 20-24 year-old males who did not cite school as their major activity at the time of the March 1974 and March 1987 surveys.

Source: March 1974 and March 1987 Current Population Survey (CPS) Public Use Tapes. Calculations by Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University.

It is remarkable that young black male college graduates increased their real annual earnings by 6.5 percent, while every other category of males suffered substantial earnings losses. (And, as W.T. Grant Commissioner William Julius Wilson has noted, income inequality associated with educational attainment creates a growing cleavage between the black middle-class and the black poor.)[6]

As Professor Sum and W. Neal Fogg of Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies have shown, 46 percent of all the jobs held by black males ages 20-24 in 1974 were blue-collar, craft, and operative occupations—at wages usually sufficient to support a family. By 1986, only 12 years later, the percentage of young black men holding such jobs had fallen to only 25 percent. Young white males experienced similar, although smaller, losses of such relatively well-paid jobs.

The consequences of these sharp earnings declines have been projected to include a marked reduction in the ability of young men—regardless of race—to support a family. As the following table illustrates, real earnings for 20-24 year-old males fell so sharply by 1985 that only 43.7 percent of them could support a family of three at incomes above the poverty line. This was down markedly from the 59.4 percent who earned above poverty-line wages 12 years earlier. For black and Hispanic 20-24 year-old males, income levels were, as we might expect, substantially lower: mean earnings in 1986 were $9,769 for whites, $7,760 for Hispanics, and only $5,299 for blacks.

Documenting the marked correlation between educational attainment and earnings, Sum and Fogg show that male high school dropouts, ages 20-24 in 1986, had mean annual earnings (in 1985 dollars) of only $6,725—42 percent lower than in 1973 and certainly not enough to support anything resembling reasonable family life. Even high school graduates earned 28.3 percent less than comparable males 11 years earlier. No wonder, then, that marriage rates among young males (ages 20-24) declined almost in half, from 39.1 percent in 1974 to 21.2 percent in 1985. Young black males, mirroring the decline in their economic fortunes, registered a 60 percent decline in marriage rates, from 29.2 percent in 1974 to only 11.1 percent in 1985. For both high school dropouts and non-college-bound graduates alike, earnings and marriage patterns are closely linked. This fact has clear implications for families. Not surprisingly, few black teenage mothers are married when their children are born. It seems clear that if we are concerned about marriage patterns, family formation, and the well-being of young families and the nation's children, we must first understand what is happening to employment and earnings patterns.

Our inquiry uncovered some additional sobering facts:

- Between 1973 and 1986, the earnings of all young males deteriorated an average of 25.8 percent. Some statistical subgroups (e.g., black dropouts) lost over 60 percent of their earning power.
- The relative size of these earnings declines was far larger for dropouts (−42 percent) than for high school graduates (−28 percent). However, even college graduates lost six percent in real earnings.
- With the exception of black college graduates, minority males fared substantially worse then whites.
- Far fewer youth, even with high school diplomas, are now able to obtain full-time, year-round employment. In March 1986, nearly 75 percent of all male high school graduates (under age 20 and not attending college) were working. However, only 65 percent of these young male workers held a full-time job. Overall, less than 49 percent of America's non-college-bound high school graduates were working full-time one to two years after receiving their diplomas. By contrast, in March 1974, 73 of every 100 male graduates held full-time jobs.
- Similarly, in March 1986, only 42 percent of female high school graduates (under age 20 and not attending college) were employed full time, a rate one-fourth lower than in March 1968.

TABLE 2

Percent of 20-24 Year-Old Males (All Educational Groups), With Real Annual Earnings At or Above the Three-Person Poverty Line, by Race/Ethnic Group: 1973-1985

(in percent)

	1973	1979	1985
All Males	59.4%	57.5%	43.7%
White, non-Hispanic	60.4%	60.4%	48.5%
Black, non-Hispanic	55.2%	41.2%	24.9%
Hispanic	61.1%	54.1%	35.4%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, CPS Public Use Tapes, March 1974, March 1980, and March 1986, tabulations by Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University.

TABLE 3

Employment to Population Ratios and Full-Time Employment to Population Ratios of High School Graduates Not Enrolled in College, 1968-1986

	Males		Females	
	(A)	(B)	(A)	(B)
Year	Employment to Population Ratio	Full-Time Employment to Population Ratio	Employment to Population Ratio	Full-Time Employment to Population Ratio
March 1968	86.5	72.7	68.9	57.0
March 1974	85.6	69.6	69.1	47.6
March 1986	75.2	48.9	71.9	41.9

- Among black high school graduates under age 20, and not enrolled in college, only 49 percent were working, and of those, only 45 percent were employed full-time. Thus, **only one of every five black graduates was able to find full-time employment.**
- As might be expected, dropouts fared worst of all in the economy. In March 1986, only 55 percent of all dropouts under age 20 were employed and, of these, only one in five was able to work full-time. In March 1968, a slight majority of all male dropouts (under age 20) were employed full time. By March 1986, this ratio had fallen to 31 percent. Among comparable females, only one in seven dropouts held full-time jobs.
- And again, as we have come to expect, **only 40 percent of black dropouts were employed, only one in eight working full time.**

Highly correlated with these declines in employment and earnings have come marked changes in young American families:

- Between 1974 and 1985, the proportion of young males (ages 20-24) married and living with their spouses fell almost by half.
- Amid a declining overall birth rate for young women, an increasing proportion of births are out of wedlock.
- The proportion of children in primary families headed by a person 20-24 years-old that lived only with their mothers doubled in the same period, rising from 14 to almost 28 percent.
- Children living in young one-parent families now have an 80 percent chance of being raised in poverty.

A recent series by Consumers Union on the plight of low-income families[7] helps to place these earnings statistics in the more understandable terms of the things that families must pay for:

- In 1974, the nation's lowest income families spent 35 percent of their total household income on rent and heating payments. By 1983, that percentage was up to 46 percent.
- In 1973, the average 30 year-old man spent 21 percent of his gross monthly income on his home mortgage payments. By 1983, he had to expend 44 percent of his earnings to meet his mortgage—up 109 percent.
- From 1974 to 1983, with little or no increase in purchasing power, the average urban household's housing and utilities costs rose by 35 percent.
- The average daily cost of a semi-private hospital room rose from $134 in July 1980 to $232 six years later. At the same time, the number of persons without health insurance rose 29 percent, one-third of them, or 12.3 million persons, under age 18.

Clearly, supporting a family is harder for a larger portion of the American public, and particularly for non-college young people, than it was only a decade ago; the gap between the haves and the have-nots continues to grow.

We have considered carefully the implications of the troubling statistics just presented. We conclude that ***the American people should set as a conscious goal of public policy the improvement of employment and earning levels for all workers, not least those lacking college education.***

In the chapters which follow, we lay out a series of measures to upgrade the American workforce. Better educated and more productive workers should be entitled to better compensation for their labor. While there is no absolute guarantee that this will follow, **we support investments in human resources as the most basic and enduring strategy for creating prosperity.** The recommended measures include:

- increased access of high school graduates to entry-level career jobs
- a greatly strengthened first-chance public school system
- a multiple option school-to-work transition system with stronger links to the workplace and other community institutions
- a renewed commitment to added-chance programs for those lacking a high school diploma, accompanied by strong emphasis on basic academic skills and workplace literacy in both pre-employment and on-the-job training
- construction of an equal access lifelong learning system to promote the education and training needs of American workers throughout their lives.

The central point of this excursion into American incomes and the living standards they support is this: just as adult Americans must stop viewing our youth as "irresponsible," "immature," and necessarily destined for a period of painful floundering, so must we stop viewing our youth as somehow solely responsible for, and totally in control of, their economic futures. The statistics related above show that even if all young people had completed high school before entering today's job market, there would be insufficient places for them—except in competing with their fellows for low-paid, part-time jobs that are, even so, in short supply in many areas of the country.

We live in an economy that exerts powerful influences on every citizen. To the extent the economy is robust and expanding, and the jobs it offers can support healthy family life, the young have an opportunity to learn, to grow, to contribute to the society and to their own families. But where and when the reverse is true, we cannot expect all youth, unaided, to create their own favorable destiny. Thousands of decisions and policies—at every level of American government, in the nation's corporate offices, personnel offices and board rooms, in collective bargaining negotiations, and in actions by foreign economic competitors—largely shape how the youth of our country fare in today's complex and interdependent global economy. This is not to say that personal initiative, effort, and willpower cannot make a difference in individual cases; only that, in the face of a stacked economic deck, these attributes are simply not enough for many. **Blaming the victim is self-defeating. Better to discover how to *help our young be successful* in a difficult and different world.**

TOWARD THE AMERICAN DREAM

For most of us, work, paid and unpaid, is at the crux of our participation in American life. The American Dream assumes families and communities will teach their young people to believe in the value of work and provide them with the skills and attitudes they need to succeed in the workplace. According to the textbooks, young people learn what they need to know about the dignity and freedom of work, as well as its obligations and constraints, from their family members. After a period of job exploration, which usually begins on a part-time basis in high school, older people help younger ones "learn the ropes," make connections, and begin their own careers.

For many this is precisely what happens. But greater mobility, changing family forms, and increased concentrations of unemployment and below-poverty-wage employment mean less contact with extended family members and other successful adults, fewer role models, and less well-developed job-finding networks. A radical shift in production from manufacturing to services, a slow-growth economy, and increased competition for a shrinking number of entry-level, career-ladder jobs also has constricted opportunities, especially for those not going on to college. These problems are real for all young people no matter how strong, resilient, and resourceful they may be. The problems multiply among single-parent families, recent immigrants, underemployed families, and the poor. For those whose lives are complicated by school failure, early parenthood, and substance abuse, the American Dream can be an all-too-elusive brass ring.

The dominant American values toward work have acquired the status of clichés: "work for a living," "pull yourself up by your bootstraps," "don't take hand-outs," "take care of your own." Despite recent speculations about a supposed "culture of poverty," which stand these clichés on their heads, there is no empirical evidence to support the view that the poor and unemployed hold values that are basically different from those of most Americans. On the contrary, empirical studies conclude that a passionately held goal of most Americans, particularly the young, is to "make it" in middle-class society, to have both the material possessions and the practical opportunities others have acquired over the years.[8]

Youth today hold these traditional views about work, but they face a different situation from what confronted past generations. Their opportunities have improved in many ways as the economy has expanded and the civil rights revolution has opened doors that once were closed. At the same time, their expectations of attaining the American Dream have been encouraged and have grown apace. Yet they find themselves frustrated by conditions in the society and the economy that create new and different barriers to realization of the Dream. Barriers that were once legalistic or based on widely accepted racism have been lowered, only to be replaced by changes in family structure that deny children and youth the adult support they need and changes in the economy that deny young people the access they ought to have to the new prosperity of America. The American Dream may seem to young people from families on the bottom of the economic ladder even more elusive than it did generations ago. We would not be surprised to find, as some studies have suggested,[9] that these altered conditions have changed the way isolated youth *perceive* their chances for realizing the American Dream. These feelings of the young are certainly more pervasive today because, as our statistics clearly show, many more of them are being reared in poverty.

Many young people have been afflicted by the decrease in traditional and extended families. In consequence, they have limited contact with adult relatives who can help them discover job requirements and job availability. Many youth live in ghettos and barrios where few adults hold steady gainful employment and where virtually all income sources are the various forms of public welfare or a variety of "street enterprises." They not only lack role models of successful employment but may not know a single adult whose stable employment supports an even modest standards of family life.

The majority of our youth, on the other hand, find their first jobs without great difficulty and move from one job to another without long periods of joblessness. There is no universal definition of the youth unemployment problem. For *most* non-college-bound youth, the problem is not unemployment but extended *under*employment in low-wage, dead-end jobs. As Freeman and Wise have demonstrated, long-term unemployment—joblessness—is concentrated among a significant fraction of our youth that is disproportionately poor and minority.[10] For many young people, we *can and should* improve the transition from school to work. For those whose enforced idleness undermines the economic and social health of a growing proportion of our population, we *must* act without further delay. Those who cannot work forfeit not only *their* future but, in an increasingly competitive world economy, *ours* as well.

THE UNSTEADY TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK: BLAMING THE VICTIM

One of the public's major expectations of the schools is that they will prepare students for jobs that will support decent standards of family life. So when young adults don't work, or work only in low-status, low-pay, and unstable jobs, people conclude that either the schools or our youth or both must be doing something wrong.

Such sweeping conclusions are questionable. Americans need a more sophisticated analysis of how our young people actually enter the workplace. Neither school-bashing nor youth-bashing is likely to get us what we want: a society where the young are prepared to achieve self-sufficiency through their own gainful employment.

The transition from school to work is not a single event in the lives of American youth. It is an extended process with several critical milestones. Most young people's first paid work is in a casual job, such as babysitting, car washing or something done quite informally for a friend or neighbor. The next form of paid employment, in the typical sequence, is a part-time job, such as cashier in a variety store, stock clerk in a grocery store, or counter helper in a fast food restaurant. Work at such jobs can readily be combined with enrollment in school without risk of academic failure, as long as work time is reasonably controlled. Other kinds of youth jobs, particularly in the middle- class, such as lifeguard, camp counselor, and farm laborer, open up during summer vacations.

Only after finishing full-time schooling do most youth begin what they and others define as their "first real job." The nature of that job depends heavily on their age, the level of schooling completed, and particularly on the youth's network of connections. The ideal situation, the one that is most consistent with the slogan "To get a good job, get a good education," is the college graduate who enters, for example, a management traineeship in a large corporation. A "first real job" of this type confers prestige, provides sufficient earnings to support independent living in a beginning household, and promises future opportunities commensurate with effort and ability. Some youth obtain respected and well-paying jobs with futures in the trades—plumbers, electricians, carpenters, landscapers, etc.—without further schooling or long-term training programs.

But the high school graduate who can find no better full-time job than the youth job he or she held while still a student is far too prevalent. For the one-half of youth who don't enroll in postsecondary education, the typical "first real job" is almost always in the secondary labor market, one that requires few skills, offers low pay and few or no benefits, little training, slim opportunity for advancement, and little significant contact with adults. Jobs of this kind are typically found in the retail service sector and, especially of late, in fast-food restaurants. These secondary labor market jobs are held disproportionately by youth, minorities, women, retirees, and the working poor.

The basic truth faced by too many youth is that regardless of how well schools do their job and regardless of how well high school graduates learn basic skills, most large, established employers seldom hire recent high school graduates for career-ladder positions, even at the entry-level. Such employers typically wait until these same youth, especially males—with no greater educational qualifications and no advanced work skills—reach age 20-22, even 25, before hiring them. In the meantime, young people alternate low paid work and unemployment with a growing frustration that erodes their confidence.

The grim reality of this all-too-typical transition from school to work helps explain why many young people don't believe the adult world's claims that graduating from high school with good academic records is the route to a good job. They know what's available for the typical high school graduate—at least in their own local job market. They have learned from the experience of relatives and friends that recent high school graduates rarely get career ladder, entry-level jobs in the primary labor market. They have seen that high school graduates generally can compete better than school dropouts for existing secondary or youth labor market jobs. However, they also soon discover that, even with a high school diploma, one's job prospects depend far more heavily upon the networks available to families and the condition of the local labor market than on one's own preparation for work.

Ironically, both unusually good and unusually bad labor market conditions can reduce a diploma's value. In areas with a high demand for labor (currently, for example, Boston, Atlanta and other eastern cities), even high school dropouts are eagerly sought by employers, and they earn no less than their classmates who stayed in school to earn diplomas. In areas of especially high unemployment (the central cities of Detroit, Cleveland and Chicago, for example), employment counselors report few jobs to be had, for dropouts or graduates alike. (Official 1986 average unemployment rates for 16-24 year-olds in these three inner cities were, respectively, 37.1 percent, 32.6 percent and 24 percent.) Not surprisingly, then, dropout rates in some inner city high schools run 40, 50, 60, even 70 percent.

Three statements summarize the foregoing discussion. First, most youth who do not enroll in higher education experience an extended floundering period in the secondary labor market before beginning a real career. Second, this pattern results primarily from the actions of employers, from adult attitudes and expectations, and from the health of the local labor market, rather than inherent characteristics of youth. Third, this pattern is damaging to both youth and to society.

According to Paul Osterman, the term "floundering period" was coined as early as the 1930s. Osterman's analysis of longitudinal data combined with his own interviews of working class youth in the Boston area confirm that the term describes something real.[11] But the way employment data are collected and reported makes it very difficult to pin down the phenomenon empirically. Both the length of the floundering period, its duration, and the proportion of youth and the number of youth caught in it are hard to calculate.

Perhaps the strongest evidence for the

floundering period and the existence of a two-tiered labor market is the ready admission by executives of large corporations that they do not hire recent high school graduates. Their justification is that young people are "not responsible enough" and are "not yet ready to settle down." From their perspective, hiring for a career-entry position in the primary labor market entails a substantial investment in training as well as compensation. That investment enhances the employee's job security and gives employers strong financial incentives to minimize their losses by only hiring people who have already been seasoned by the period of floundering—a process that works to the benefit of employers but damages youth.

Floundering reflects the logic of employer economics, not inherent youthful instability. We can see why when we compare the way youth and employers behave under different conditions and when we clarify the rationale for discriminating against young applicants. It is instructive to note that when American employers face a limited supply of labor, as during World War II, they readily hire even high school dropouts for primary labor market jobs. Moreover, as Professor Stephen Hamilton of Cornell University has shown, teenagers in West Germany who have been thoroughly trained as apprentices move easily into "adult" positions in the primary labor market. At age 18, with less formal schooling than their American counterparts, German youths are deemed ready to be skilled auto mechanics, policemen, personnel officers, management trainees, travel agents, etc. Apparently, they demonstrate as much responsibility and seriousness of purpose as do older Germans.[12] Are German youths really more mature than Americans? Or do our institutional arrangements for the non-college-bound perpetuate the myth of youth's "unreadiness" and "irresponsibility"?

Since the late 1960s, the pool of potential workers has expanded greatly; they also are better educated. Faced with a surplus of applicants, employers have been able to reduce their losses from unwise selections by using age as a primary selection criterion. School credentials, race, dress, deportment, and diction perform similar sorting out functions. These exclusionary criteria do not work with unerring accuracy, but from the employer's viewpoint they prevent probable unwise choices. From society's vantage point, however, we see that in order to avoid a few casualties, employers lower opportunity for an entire age group or for those who do not meet the stereotyped model of a compliant, trainable worker. In other words, the criterion becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. An 18 year-old who lives alone probably is more likely than a 25 year-old with family responsibilities to give up a job without proper notice to accept a new one. But teenagers deserve their due; when they are restricted to marginal jobs with no room for advancement, the only way they can improve their position is to quit and take a new job at higher pay or with some other advantage. When teenagers exercise their limited options, employers often perceive this behavior as further evidence of young people's irresponsibility rather than as their only way of dealing with the choices they face.

But if the pattern is typical, why is it harmful? What evidence is there that floundering in the labor market is damaging to youth? The question can only be answered indirectly, by argument and inference. Relegating young high school graduates who have the education, energy, and commitment for responsible work to the same minimum wage jobs they held before graduation surely wastes their productive potential and almost certainly lowers their morale. Whether delaying the entry of youth into careers reduces their productivity over the long term is more difficult to determine. At best, a floundering period seems less than the best introduction to the world of work, an experience of frustrated expectations that is likely to damage some young people. At worst, it can breed cynicism and eventually despair. Substance abuse and crime and street violence fill the void for some young people, particularly inner-city males, making life so hazardous that a significant proportion of this group of 18 year-olds doesn't live to reach age 25. (Homicide among black 15-24 year-old males, while it has declined 40 percent from 1970 to 1984, is still over five times greater than the comparable white male homicide rate.)[13]

While damage due to floundering is difficult to prove, Hamilton argues that the absence of a clear, direct path from school to work contributes to much problematic behavior among American youth. He contrasts international statistics: white teenage women in the United States are twice as likely as their West German counterparts to give birth, while blacks give birth five times as frequently. Alcohol use is comparable in the two countries even though it is legal in West Germany and illegal in this country for those under 18 and, in some states, 21. Drug use is five times greater in the United States; juvenile crime and the incarceration of juveniles are so much greater in the United States as to be on a different scale. Murder and automobile accidents kill 50 percent more young American than West German males; suicide rates are comparable.[14]

These figures demonstrate the difficulty of many American youth in becoming adults. Having a child too soon, abusing drugs and alcohol, criminal behavior and, ultimately, violence are formidable barriers in the path to adulthood. But the comparisons suggest strongly, even if they do not prove, that others may be doing a better job than we with the transition to work aspects of youth's development and preparation for responsible adulthood. We know for certain that a variety of countries have more extensive policies than does the United States to help their young people make the move from school to promising careers.[15]

Several researchers have concluded that part of the explanation for the distressing levels of problem behavior in this country lies in young people's expectations for the future and the connections they see between current behavior and future opportunities. When they observe a direct relationship between what they do in school, their work experience, and accessible future careers, they are more willing to make present sacrifices in hope of future gains. When they believe their futures will be dim regardless of their own effort, they have less incentive to behave in personally and socially responsible ways.[16]

In summary, we see no justification for the popular image of American youth as occupationally unstable and irresponsible, fit only for a period of painful floundering in the low-pay, low-status, part-time, and temporary employment in the secondary labor market. Rather, we view non-college-bound youth as victims of a set of imperfect institutional arrangements governing their passage from schooling to employment. As a nation, we simply don't expect our recent high school graduates to embark on real careers. On the contrary, we think of them as unready for the serious business of earning a living and supporting a family. Accordingly, we expect them to flounder from one job to another, to mill around until they "grow up" and are ready to embark upon a career. It is far easier to blame our young for their shortcomings (and, simultaneously, to blame the schools for improperly preparing them to work) than to examine our society's lack of an effective institutional bridge between schooling and careers.

"*Education is a bigger factor in productivity growth than increased capital, economies of scale or better allocation of resources.*"

David Kearns, Chairman of Xerox Corporation

Chapter 3

A Better First Chance: Improved Schooling

The first, and still the best, way to get off to a good start is through education, and particularly learning the basic skills in the early grades. This is a truism among all Americans, both rich and poor, liberal and conservative, the learned and the uneducated. Recent research has only tended to confirm what most of us suspected all along: children who fail to master basic skills in the early grades are many times more likely as young adults to have a child out of wedlock, to be out of work, on welfare, or arrested for a crime.

But while we all agree on the importance of good schooling, over the years, many have disagreed on the proper focus of that schooling. Today, we are being told that we must all "work smarter" in order to raise productivity and be competitive with other nations. The Commission views with optimism the "school reform" movement of this decade because it has given renewed public attention to education's vital role in our nation's future. The many school reform reports have also stressed the importance of having high standards for all students and spotlighted the need to elevate the teaching profession. But ours is a cautious optimism, tempered on several counts.

Young people already on the brink of adulthood cannot afford to wait for these school reforms to take hold and bear fruit. A sizeable number of youth—too many for a pragmatic or a just society to ignore—already suffer the consequences of school failure. Inadequately prepared, they are unable to compete in, or contribute to, an expanding economy. Continued unemployment pulls this group further and further away from the mainstream and threatens all of us with the prospect of a sharply divided society. So, while school improvement is important for *future* economic and social health, there are many young people already in trouble or clearly headed for it. They need an *added chance now* if they and our democracy are to survive and flourish.

We are also concerned about specific aspects of this latest school reform movement. Some reports appear to suggest that a college education is not just the best, but the only, way to succeed in America. Based on current trends, less than 30 percent of today's high school students will get a college degree. Should the criterion of American success be so narrowly defined that it excludes the majority of our youth?

Most of the reform reports have dwelled on the importance of discipline in schools and uniformity in the curriculum. If the message here is that schooling requires order, a challenging menu of academics, and concerted effort by children and teachers, the message is a worthy one. However, if this call for discipline and uniformity leads to a school regimen that stifles young people and stresses the routine to the detriment of innovation, it will not foster schools of excellence. Research in education has consistently concluded that different students learn best in different ways. This finding—while virtually uncontested among scholars—does not give us a simple road map for improving all of our schools, but it does offer a caution. An attempt to homogenize schooling will not create better education for all. Instead, it is an effort that will narrow schooling to suit the few.

In addition, the notion of a "reform" movement has allowed many to conclude that we need only call on our schools to "shape up." Our schools need support and encouragement to improve, not just

criticism. The school reform movement has been accompanied by an undue amount of school bashing. A steady drumbeat of criticism can be counterproductive if our intent is to improve the schools. What does the constant message that schools are dreadful and getting worse do to teachers, administrators, and students who live much of their lives there? What effect must it have on parents who need a modicum of confidence in school personnel if they are to work effectively with them? Not only may this message have a distressing impact, it is also not founded on fact. The evidence shows that in this decade, as during every period of American history, since public schools became the norm, more of our young people are going to school, learning the basics at a young age, and graduating from high school. It may be news to many Americans, but the National Assessment of Educational Progress—our best barometer of school achievement—has found steady improvements in reading stability and in writing among young pupils over the past 15 years. And the dropout rate for high school students—though staggeringly high in many urban high schools—is still lower than at any supposed Golden Age in the past.

Finally, **raising educational levels is a necessary but not a sufficient policy. We must recognize that many of society's jobs, as presently constituted, do not offer the compensation and fringe benefits to support family life at a decent standard of living.** We know that educational and skill levels are already high in several parts of the country, e.g., the farm belt and large parts of the oil states that suffer from severe economic trauma. Therefore, **we cannot look to educational remedies as a cure-all, especially when the malady is essentially economic in character.**

We do not presume to propose solutions to the overall economic situation that both constrains young people's opportunities and increasingly demands more of them to be better prepared. The cause of these changes are matters beyond the scope and expertise of this Commission. Instead, we have looked for those points of leverage that are currently available to help remedy an ailing economy's effects. An improved system of schooling is certainly one of these.

Our primary objective should be to keep students in school and learning through, and beyond, high school graduation. We believe this can be done by paying greater attention to the different ways in which students learn and by providing greater flexibility in how they are taught.

Our second objective, no less essential, is to improve students' basic skills and the range of their learning opportunities. By providing far greater flexibility in how, where, and from whom young people learn, we can help more of our youth not only to cope but to grow into mastery of their full potential.

This and the following chapter describe a variety of tested models and techniques that could form the basic elements of such a system. ***The challenge at hand is not the creation of new programs, but the wider, more co-ordinated implementation of the many successful practices that already exist in schools and communities throughout the country.*** Schools are best-equipped to form the nucleus of this expanding system, but a wide variety of community institutions must also exercise initiative. If the gaps among schools, voluntary agencies, and employers are to be effectively bridged and networks created that will better prepare young people to find jobs, community leaders and local business interests must assume greater roles in the school-to-work transition. Fortunately, in many communities this activity is well underway. (Appendix A, **Agenda for Action: Enough for All to Share,** summarizes specific ways in which local communities offer a variety of promising activities.)

EDUCATION: BIG PAYOFFS—BUT NOT ENOUGH WAYS TO SUCCEED

Recent analyses of data by Professor Andrew Sum of Northeastern University from the *National Longitudinal Survey of Young Americans* show powerful correlations between levels of academic skills and youths' prospects for participation in society. Policymakers and community leaders need to ponder the meaning and implications of important figures like these:[1]

Young people with reading and mathematics scores in the bottom fifth relative to their peers in the top half are far more likely to become parents at an early age. For example,

- girls, who by age 14 or 15 have basic skills scores in the bottom fifth, are five times as likely to become mothers before age 16 as those scoring in the top half;
- young women, who by age 17 or 18 have very weak basic skills, are two and a half times as likely to be mothers before age 20 as those in the top half of the basic skills distribution; and
- young men, who by age 17 or 18 have very weak basic skills, are three times as likely to become fathers before age 20 as

those scoring in the top half.

Young adults ages 18-23 with basic academic skills in the bottom fifth of the distribution relative to their peers in the top half are:

- 8.8 times more likely to have left school without a diploma;
- 8.6 times more likely to have had a child out of wedlock;
- 5.4 times more likely to be receiving some form of public assistance;
- 5.0 times more likely to be at poverty-level in income and not in schooling of any type;
- 3.6 times more likely to be neither working, nor in school, nor taking care of a child; and
- 2.2 times more likely to have been arrested in the previous year.

When youth who graduated in 1980 in the bottom quarter of their class are compared with graduates in the top half of their class:

- those in the bottom quarter were only one-fifth as likely to be in college (either graduate or undergraduate school), five years after graduation; and
- those in the top half of academic skills distribution were 70 times more likely to be enrolled in college and majoring in engineering, math or physical science programs than those in the bottom quarter.

Growing up in poverty dramatically increases a young person's statistical chances of having weak basic skills. Nearly half of all poor youth score in the bottom fifth of the basic skills distribution, while over three-fourths of all poor youth have below-average basic skills.

The combination of poverty and weak basic skills, not race or ethnicity, also correlates highly with disparities in teen childbearing rates. Young women (ages 16-19) with below average basic skills who live in poor families—whether white, black, or Hispanic—are six times more likely to have children than young women with above average basic skills living in nonpoor households.

- Fewer than one in 20 young women under age 20 with above average basic skills and above the poverty level income is a mother.
- More than one in five young women with below average basic skills and below the poverty level income is a mother.

A mother's educational attainment is a powerful influence on her child's aspirations and achievements. Therefore, the earlier we can raise young people's basic skills, the better off they and society will surely be and the less costly will be our long-term investment in healthy, literate, and productive citizens. (Hence, our specific recommendations for increased investments in proven programs to raise the workplace skills and general competence of our future labor force are detailed in Chapter 7.)

The patterns these statistics illustrate do not imply direct cause and effect relationships. There is no guarantee that later improvements in education will ever fully redress the damage of earlier school failure. They do suggest, however, that education reform is of crucial importance and will bring some degree of improved opportunity and performance. They also suggest the wisdom of more school programs designed to prevent failure *before* it occurs.

Phenomena like unwed teenage pregnancy and the dropout problem are too complex to be amenable to single-solution quick fixes. Just as poor academic progress in the schools *is* a powerful contributor to dropping out and other problems, so we must not assume that poor academic performance is their *sole*, or even primary, cause. Family stress, financial hardship, physical disability, and lack of friendly support by adults may all play a role in individual decisions to leave school. Dropping out is more than just a problem for the schools. ***Solving the dropout problem calls for long-term prevention efforts beginning prenatally and requires a total mobilization of resources at all levels of society, with schools in the vanguard.***

THE BENEFITS OF WISE INVESTMENT

The good news is that we know of programs that work. The U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families has compiled compelling evidence that the state of public knowledge is now sufficient to warrant public expenditures which, in the joint declaration of the Democratic and Republican leaders of the committee, not only improve the lives of participating children but "save public moneys as well."[2]

We cite here a few additional examples of the kinds of *proven, preventive interventions* which must be strengthened and expanded if our nation is ever to decrease its reliance on more expensive remedial efforts.

WIC, the **Women, Infants and Children Feeding Program,** for example, provides high protein foods to 3.3 million low-income pregnant and nursing women, infants, and nutritionally at-risk children. WIC's $1.7 billion budget serves less than half the eligible population. Findings of a recent evaluation conducted at the Albert Einstein Medical College (The Bronx), are worth emphasis here.[3]

WIC participation:

- reduces fetal deaths by up to one-third;
- reduces premature births among high risk mothers by 15-25 percent;
- improves the diets of both pregnant women and children;
- brings women into prenatal care earlier;
- improves the likelihood that children will have a regular source of medical care and will be better immunized;
- has the largest positive impact among minorities and the least educated participants;
- is efficient, serving the recipients intended by the legislation; and
- shows increased brain growth and promising evidence of improved cognitive development among infants of participating WIC mothers, and among preschoolers who became WIC participants as infants.

> *America is betting its future on its schools. It is more important now than at any other time in our country's history that the students graduating from our educational institutions can think critically and be productive.*
>
> James A. Kelly, President
> National Board for Professional
> Teaching Standards

Outstanding results have also been recorded in other health programs, especially prenatal services and child immunization, which have cost-benefit ratios up to $10 saved for every $1 expended. Yet, these programs still fail to reach at least a quarter of all first trimester pregnancies, while up to a quarter of all young children remain unprotected against rubella, mumps, polio, and measles.

Head Start is now generally regarded as a classic example of dollars and creative ideas making a positive difference in the lives of children. Since its inception in 1965, this demonstration child development program has offered a comprehensive mix of educational, social, medical, dental, nutritional, and mental health services to some 10 million low-income preschoolers and their families. Head Start has had a significant impact upon the thinking and practice of educators and other child development professionals and led to the growth of a new profession of child development associates.

A 1983 review of 1,500 Head Start research and evaluation studies concluded that the program was responsible for:

- improvement in children's performance on school achievement tests, including reading, gains in cognitive development, and fewer grade retentions and special class placements;
- positive impact on child socialization and the development of socially mature behavior;
- lower absenteeism from school, fewer cases of anemia, more immunizations, better nutritional practices, and generally better health;
- positive attitudes of parents toward their children, favorable changes in interactions between mothers and their children, and an increase in later parent participation in public schools; and
- influencing local educational and health institutions to become more responsive to the needs of the poor.

Head Start's current budget of $1.13

billion serves only 450,000 children, less than 19 percent of the 2.4 million eligible children who could benefit greatly from the program. At the current average annual cost of $2,445 per child, full funding of Head Start alone would cost over $4.7 billion more than we are now spending on this proven program.[4]

[redacted]

Chapter 1 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act—the 22-year-old compensatory federal education program—is also worthy of larger public investments. Approximately five million students—about 11 percent of the entire public school student body—participate in Chapter 1 programs each year. Each year about two million students begin receiving Chapter 1 services while an equal number are removed from the program. Over 90 percent of all participating students are in the elementary school grades. Lack of funding to continue remediation into the upper grades, and particularly into the high schools, is the principal reason for their termination. With a current budget of $3.94 billion, Chapter 1 and its predecessor have never been funded at more than a fraction of the levels originally thought necessary to combat educational disadvantage when the program was enacted in 1965.

School districts differ greatly in the educational needs of their student bodies, in their judgment about what kinds of Chapter 1 services will best serve their students, in their efficiency in using this support, and in the amount of state and local funding available to each child. Thus, total per-pupil expenditures may vary by thousands of dollars, making it extremely difficult to attribute educational achievement solely to Chapter 1 expenditures.[5]

Nevertheless, the most recent Chapter 1 evaluations are encouraging. They point to the wisdom of extended services, both to more students and over more years of schooling, built upon the accumulated experience of over a generation:[6]

- The achievement of disadvantaged students has improved since 1965, especially in reading, relative to the achievement of the general population.
- Students receiving Chapter 1 services show larger increases in their standardized achievement test scores than comparable students who do not. However, their gains do not move them substantially toward the achievement levels of more advantaged students.
- Students participating in Chapter 1 mathematics programs gain more than those participating in Chapter 1 reading programs.
- Students in early elementary Chapter 1 programs gain more than students participating in later-grade programs.
- The achievement gap between disadvantaged and advantaged students appears to widen during the summer months.
- Students who discontinue Title I appear gradually to lose the gains they made when receiving services.
- Chapter 1 students with very low achievement scores appear to maintain their relative academic positions but not to move ahead. However, the evidence suggests they would have lost ground relative to their peers if they had not received services.
- Researchers have recently identified a number of instructional practices that are likely to increase the achievement of disadvantaged students.

While there is no precise measurement of how many educationally disadvantaged students are eligible for Chapter 1 programs, most observers and the U.S. Department of Education agree that only about half of the eligible students are currently being served; many of these students are receiving minimal service insufficient to overcome their educational deficiencies. Thus, a doubling of current federal expenditures—$3.9 billion in fiscal year 1987—would merely provide programs for all who need compensatory or remedial services. Beyond additional coverage, more intensive Chapter 1 programs, including those in the high schools, are also required if the full promise of the program is to be realized.[7]

[redacted]

THE DROPOUT PROBLEM IN PERSPECTIVE

Dropping out is not an irreversible act. Some students eventually do return to school to earn a high school diploma or a General Educational Development Certificate (GED). Depending on how dropping out is defined, statistics can highlight failure, ignore recovery, and obscure the positive achievements of public education in producing unprecedented levels of school completion.

Part of this confusion is caused by difficulty in obtaining precise data on dropouts. Different schools and school systems have different reporting systems and definitions. The most distressing statistics define dropouts as those young people who do not graduate with their age cohort. These report the proportion of those who do not graduate on time at about 25 percent nationally, and much higher in some urban districts. However, this reporting system fails to take account of those students who transfer to other schools and subsequently graduate without notifying the school that reported them as dropouts. Others may graduate a year or two late. Still more may obtain a (GED). Two crucial questions are what proportion of youth do not have a high school diploma or its equivalent as they enter the full responsibilities of adulthood and what levels of learning are represented by high school credentials?

One estimate of the proportion of youth who do not have a high school diploma is based on the number who were enrolled in school during the previous year but not in the current year. For 14-24 year-olds, this one-class-year dropout rate fell from 6.3 percent in 1978 to 5.2 percent in 1983, a decline of 17 percent. Looking only at the age group that should have graduated, those 19- 24, the proportion neither enrolled in school nor possessing a diploma was 15 percent in 1983, down one-sixth, from 18 percent in 1973. If the age group is extended from 24 to 29, the dropout rate for 1983 falls to less than 14 percent.[8] **In other words, by age 29, more than 86 percent of our young people have earned a high school diploma or the GED. This is a solid, even historic, achievement which should not be taken for granted. Nor, in light of the serious problems which persist in some school districts, is it grounds for complacency.**

What is most encouraging is that recent gains have been registered primarily by black males, whose dropout rate now approximates that of white males. Furthermore, the most notable academic gains have occurred in the first eight grades. Therefore, even those who do drop out have persisted longer in school, making it easier for them to acquire a diploma at a later date. The schools and our young people deserve more credit than they are getting for what has been achieved. More effective dropout prevention and GED programs are surely needed to build on these accomplishments.[9] (The elements of successful programs are discussed in Appendix B, **On Effective Education and Remediation Programs for Youth.**)

Society needs to invest heavily in efforts to strengthen the schools, to reduce dropout rates, and to convert nominal educational attainment (that is, years spent in school) into actual educational achievement (that is, acquiring knowledge and useful skills).

We also remind ourselves that America's educational system was not designed solely to prepare young people for gainful employment. Any proposals for improvement must also address its critical noneconomic purposes. Schooling is a means of assuring the perpetuation of a democratic society and each citizen's "pursuit of happiness." People who have experienced good schooling are more likely to continue learning. They participate more fully in cultural and political activities. And they are more likely to have acquired habits of mind that contribute to a full and rewarding life.

TOWARD MORE OPTIONS IN SCHOOL PRACTICES

Schools need to develop effective dropout prevention strategies that will retain students in school through graduation and help them to develop habits and attitudes of lifelong learning. If they are to be successful, schools must pay heed to several generations of research which have shown that all students do not learn in the same way; therefore, they should not all be taught in the same way. This is not a new recommendation, but one that has been frequently misunderstood in the past, with grave consequences. It does *not* mean that because some students learn in different ways than others that they should be taught different things. This interpretation has too often led to a tracking system and two-tiered educational outcomes. Today's world and certainly tomorrow's demand that all Americans share a common set of skills and knowledge. Ours is a highly advanced technological age that requires a core of literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving skills among *all* those who would compete and shared knowledge of the rules and conventions that form our legal, historical, and cultural traditions among all who would be citizens.

Yet, there are many ways to develop these skills and to acquire this knowledge. School experiences should vary accordingly. Some can learn through traditional academic approaches; some will benefit from greater variety in classroom routines; some need special individualized help; some learn certain subjects best through applied experience; and some need more time to achieve understanding. **We believe that *all* young people have the capacity to learn; *what* they learn should be commonly challenging, but *how, where, and when* they learn should be determined by what works best for them.**[10]

Young people's learning abilities are not only different; in some cases they are hindered by very real barriers. A variety of learning problems, ranging from mental retardation and severe physical impairments to relatively subtle weaknesses in language, memory, attention, and motor function, are potent reminders that what is good for most is not necessarily best—or good enough—for all. Special interventions are needed to enable special learners to succeed. Classification systems—identifying a student as learning disabled or educably retarded or hyperactive—are widely used to make sure needed resources are targeted at the students who need them. In many cases, giving a name to the learner's problems can help teachers and families be more sensitive and understanding. But even though these subgroupings are designed to recognize differences, they can be dangerously global, still stereotyping young people into groups, albeit smaller ones.[11]

[redacted]

ALTERNATIVE INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

The oft-repeated complaint that educational research is unrelated to practice is no longer justifiable. Recent research, although it certainly does not answer all questions, has been clear and practical enough to lead in some new directions. The best known has been the *effective schools* research. Initiated in response to the too-facile interpretation that the 1966 Coleman Report meant that schools do not make a difference, effective school researchers identified schools whose students' test scores were better than might have been predicted according to their family backgrounds. They then examined what was done inside those schools to achieve such results. The findings have been stated in terms of a list of characteristics and practices. Although the characteristics of effective schools have remained rather general (e.g., "The principal is an instructional leader." "School climate is orderly and businesslike."), they have provided a useful roadmap to people in schools struggling to do a better job; and they appear to have contributed to improved test scores in many urban schools.[12]

A comparable body of research has accumulated at the classroom level under the label *effective teaching*. Again, test scores as compared to expectations for students from certain backgrounds have been the criteria for assessing effectiveness. The practices of teachers deemed effective have been closely observed. Most impressively and more systematically than the effective schools research, investigators in this arena have been able to demonstrate under controlled conditions that when average teachers are trained to do the things effective teachers do, their students' test scores also rise.[13]

The principal limitation on both these bodies of research is the validity and sufficiency of standardized test scores as indicators of educational effectiveness. It is unreasonable to argue that test scores are irrelevant. However, they clearly fail to measure many important aspects of knowledge, skill, and creativity and almost all aspects of attitude and behavior. Moreover, a danger exists that overemphasis on raising test scores may encourage teaching to the test, mere rote learning, and neglect of less quantifiable but no less critical educational goals. While studies and reform efforts dependent on standardized test results may constitute some of the most encouraging news about American education in decades, other evidence indicates that the tests are used in ways that can damage some children.

The form of pedagogy most clearly identified with the effective teaching movement has been labelled direct instruction. It is a traditional method of teaching, directed by the teacher to the whole class. It requires frequent responses or recitation by students. Most surprising, in view of prevailing beliefs, direct instruction is not individualized. Its proponents argue on the basis of their research that students learn best when interacting with a teacher, rather than doing seatwork on their own. In a conventional classroom, one-to-one interaction between a teacher and an individual student requires that the teacher ignore all of the other students. By directing instruction to the whole class, teachers maximize students' time-on-task.[14]

Two other forms of pedagogy that have been extensively researched in recent years are mastery learning and cooperative learning. *Mastery learning* is based on the "revolutionary" idea that all students can achieve the same high standards if they are taught under proper conditions. It relies heavily on individualized diagnosis and prescription and provides for review and extra time for those who begin at a lower level than others. Although it has been implemented with apparent success in some schools, teachers in other schools have complained about the amount of time required to adjust instruction to each individual and to give, score, and record frequent tests. Recent research suggests that the slowest learners may need as much as six times more learning time than high achievers to master specific skills. This very focused instruction my come at the expense of breadth of knowledge.[15]

Cooperative learning recognizes that students are a valuable and available resource for helping other students. Originally, it grew out of concerns about how to integrate minority students into desegregated classrooms, to avoid their resegregation into lower tracks and classes for slow learners, and to deal with an overemphasis on competition and individual performance in American schools. Cooperative learning calls for teamwork and mutual assistance in completing assignments, sometimes in competition with other mixed-ability teams in the same classroom. As a result, the performance of the slowest students becomes just as important to the team as the performance of the brightest. Thus, everyone on the team helps everyone else, feels pride in the team's accomplishments, and is motivated to learn.[16]

Computer-assisted instruction also deserves mention as a promising pedagogical technique. Given its history over the past two decades, however, we would be unwise to herald a new golden era of power learning. We have heard that promise before, and it has not yet been fulfilled. Optimism is justified, however, by the emergence of the hardware required for complex interactive instructional programs and by improved understanding of both learning and teaching processes. As in other realms of computer technology, the challenge is to develop software that exploits both the power of new microcomputers and what we know about how people learn. To date, few good software programs bring all these elements together and probably will not until the market for instructional software becomes as lucrative as the ones for word processing, spreadsheets, and games.[17]

The Remediation and Training Institute of Washington, D.C. has demonstrated notable results in its Comprehensive Competencies Program (CCP). It brings together in one place a range of instructional techniques, technologies, and materials to improve basic skills of both teenagers and adults. At a cost of less than $10 per student instructional hour, CCP can raise reading and mathematics basic skills over one grade level with only about 27 instructional hours. Computers are central in CCP, perhaps more critical for its student testing and extensive management information system than for instruction. Some 16,000 students currently use CCP in over 240 learning centers in schools, colleges, community organizations, prisons, union halls, workplaces, and job training sites. Like other instructional programs, CCP's challenge now is to find ways to retain more of its enrollees for longer periods of self-paced instruction and, hence, genuine educational gains.[18]

Interactive video combines computer-aided instruction with video presentation. It is increasingly used for training in industry and the military. It has great promise for schools and alternative educational programs. Video disks, unlike tapes, offer immense storage capacity and instant access to material stored on any part of the disk. At this writing, video is still expensive to produce, and little software for schools or youth programs exists.

Alternative schools are an old idea whose time is still here. Though they have dropped out of the spotlight in the 1980s, they are alive and well in most cities because they continue to serve students who cannot or will not succeed in conventional schools. So-called "counter-culture" or "free" schools may be less common, but they were never the only type of alternative school. Many alternative schools were founded explicitly as "last chance" institutions for dropouts, actual and potential, and that is how many continue to operate.[19]

In the 1980s, alternative also has come to mean the opposite of counter-culture schools. Some newer alternative schools, such as the New Orleans Free School, stress strong academics in an atmosphere much more rigorous and structured than the regular public school.

During the 1970s, a new form of alternative mushroomed in school districts under court order to desegregate. These were *magnet schools*, started as pilots in a few large districts, such as Chicago and Dallas. When federal judges began to accept magnet school plans as fulfillment of desegregation orders, citywide magnet programs sprouted coast to coast. Their development was boosted by the availability of earmarked federal funds for magnet schools.

Houston was one of the first large school districts to develop a comprehensive plan, offering choices that include math, science, foreign languages, and art. Today, almost every large city district offers magnet schools. Columbus, Ohio, for example, will convert every school to some kind of magnet focus for the 1987-88 school year.

Some alternative high schools are especially designed to attract dropouts back into regular schooling, usually by offering preparation for the high school equivalency (GED) examination. Community colleges often meet this need for both youth and adults. LaGuardia Community College's

Middle College High School, in New York City, is an interesting effort. Although it is a high school and serves high school-age youth, it is located on a community college campus. Young people who have dropped out of high school respond well to being treated as adults in these surroundings. They do the work that their former high school teachers could not get them to do or that their earlier immaturity prevented.

The spread of community colleges through most of the country makes this system a promising partner in improving the educational achievement of many more young people and many adults.

As an institution that can serve as an alternative source of a high school diploma for youth and also meet adults' needs for high school equivalency instruction, for vocational training, and for inexpensive college education, the U.S. community college system is unique and underappreciated. Now that the system has been established, we need to search for better ways to use it. At a minimum, a need exists for better coordination between community colleges and secondary schools on one hand and four-year colleges on the other.[20] *We urge state policymakers and school and community leaders to take the necessary steps to overcome the detrimental separation between schools and community colleges.*

Finally, we observe, several states and communities are making notable experiments with the concept of *choice*, with parents and students shaping the kind of educational experiences they want. For example, Minnesota has experimented the last two years with a plan allowing junior and senior high school students to select from among several higher education options, e.g., community colleges or public and private four-year campuses for specific courses. Public money follows the student to the campus, and the student receives both high school graduation credit and higher education credit. (In the first year of the program, participating students averaged B in their college coursework). For the 1987-88 school year, approximately one-third of Minnesota's school districts are participating in the experiment.

In Colorado, high school students who are not progressing as they should in their home districts are allowed, with permission of the receiving district, to transfer to another school. School districts in Vermont that do not operate high schools provide funding for students to attend schools of their choice outside the school district. We expect many more experiments in choice will be mounted as more policymakers realize that many young persons are equal to the challenge of more flexible and yet no less demanding educational options.

The numerous reports and programs collectively known as the school reform movement make many recommendations worthy of support, but we would go further. [redacted] States that have already achieved this target should strive for further improvement. This approach would make dropout reduction a statewide responsibility and encourage states to give special assistance to those districts with the greatest dropout problems.

[redacted] This public accountability would likely increase school pride, and possibly performance, in schools that successfully met their desired outcomes. More important, this method would readily identify schools in need of special help. Although implementation would be a matter for local communities, districts, and individual schools to decide, [redacted]

These efforts can make a real difference. But **the public must also understand that educational improvement cannot be managed well by any one institution acting in isolation. While schools have the *primary* responsibility for serving young people, to succeed they must have the active support of other institutions in the community—** families, public and private agencies, community centers, voluntary religious and service organizations, employers, and the media. We must not let any institution off the hook but, rather, must tap the strengths and resources of every institution that can help youth make a constructive contribution to society. That is the thrust of the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Bridging the Gap from School to Work

IMPROVING THE SCHOOL-TO-WORK TRANSITION FOR *ALL* OUR YOUTH

For our best students, America's education system offers a ladder which takes them, step by step, from elementary school to a professional career. Do well in each grade and you move up to the next level. But it is important to recognize that only a fraction of our children will work their way up this ladder. Most will get off at some point along the way, with no ready niche to step into.

It would be wrong to say that the transition between school and the work world is the "weakest link" in our education and training system—wrong because this assumes there is a link at all. For the students not going on to college or to further training, school ends one day and the search for a job—any job, not a career—begins the next.

Faced with this "sink-or-swim" dilemma, most young people swim. They may lack skills, a credential, or the connections that will create for them an easy niche in the work world, but they find a way to swim nevertheless. As many have concluded from a look at the newspaper "help wanted ads," there are many jobs available in our economy. However, those that are most available for young people are low-paying, part-time positions, often with irregular hours and no future. They are distinctly jobs, not careers.

It should not be suprising, too, that a distressing number of these youth flounder. Ignorant of the world of work, lacking confidence in their own abilities, and needing a helping hand, these youth do not get started in a productive life. Instead, they may get started in a life of drugs, depression, and despair. Again, we point out that this is not the general rule. Most of our non-college-bound youth manage to swim against an economic tide that is flowing against them. Most adults—whether working in schools or community colleges, in business and industry, in local government, or in our communities—do distressingly little to give them a hand. The Commission believes that our economy is being damaged and, more importantly, young lives are being damaged, by our collective failure to help young people make a smoother transition from school to work.

In the United States, the almost exclusive responsibility for youth's transition to work is lodged with parents and the schools. Many parents have networks and associations that allow them to give their teenagers a hand in finding jobs. But particularly in poverty families, these informal but important connections are too often absent, leaving teenagers dependent on their own initiatives or on the schools. Yet, our schools are largely isolated from the community and from the workplace. A host of blue ribbon panel recommendations calling for an end to the school's isolation from the larger community have been largely ignored.[2] Instead, the public seems to have assumed that the lingering problem of youth unemployment is due mostly to inadequate academic skills, and so it places most of the blame on the schools. Politicians and the media charge that declining productivity and loss of international competitiveness are due largely to the failure of our schools, the innate "irresponsibility" of adolescents, or both.

Obviously, this is not a problem that can be solved by the schools alone. Instead, the

Commission urges school authorities, business leaders, and community officials to join together in greatly expanded efforts to aid youth. The image of these "floundering" young people should not be seen as evidence that youth have failed, but rather that adults of the community have failed to give them a fair chance to get started.

Programs which connect students in school with the world of work can give young people both knowledge of work and knowledge of themselves, experience they need to find a career pathway for themselves. There are models of such programs, many of which have been working successfully for decades. The balance of this chapter speaks to some of these models. But these remain the exception rather than the rule. Much more needs to be done in most communities—urban, suburban, and rural—throughout this nation.

> ***If this society is to produce adults who can function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens, then new structures and processes for socializing youth must be created within the framework of the school itself and in cooperation with other institutions serving young people.***
>
> Dan Conrad & Diane Hedin[1]

There is another powerful reason for urging that the lock-step model of schooling be discarded. The best education is not limited to academic learning. Even our brightest students fail to achieve their fullest potential—and many flounder—when learning is confined solely to books and school lectures. Many of the "school reform" reports have assumed that the schools have failed only to teach *enough* academic subjects and that students have failed to absorb *enough* academic material. The assumed solution is more of the same: more time in school by creating longer days or a longer school year, more academic courses required for graduation, and more standardization of those courses. The Commission has serious reservations about such a blanket policy when applied to youth who learn in many different ways and who are already overly-cloistered in school. **More classwork, more uniformly taught and more bureaucratically controlled, may not be the best solution for all students. It is most** [illegible]

We agree with Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers, that **genuine school reform has only just begun. More of what has failed us in the past seems like a sure-fire prescription for public disillusionment:**

> *It would be a disaster if the public judged the whole of the reform movement on the basis of attempts to push our classrooms back into the supposed good old days. The public wanted standards and it wanted schools to do things differently. Instead, the public is often getting standardization and a spiffed-up version of the same old thing—mandated texts and lock-step curriculum, heavy emphasis on uniform and narrow tests, bogus accountability schemes, and more power to school bureaucracy and to the traditional top-down, factory style of schooling.*
>
> *Large numbers of our students didn't fare well in this system in the past. There's little reason to suppose that a tightened version of the same old thing will serve them now.*[3]

Students who are developing an image of their future niche in the adult world often have distorted and partial views of the adult "places" that are available to them. But they eventually work out a rough idea of the path they are likely to take and then act on these ideas. The tendency of schools to concentrate on verbal and mathematical-logical skills—best-suited, according to Howard Gardner, to produce college professors—to the virtual exclusion of other modes of learning, risks losing the young person who does not choose to pursue an academically-oriented vocation. Many of these young people, referred to as "school-weary" by the Germans, do not do well in traditional schools either because they are not good in standard academic subjects as they have been traditionally taught *or* because they don't want to, or see no value, in performing well. Many of these students are only barely scraping by—and often dropping out—not for lack of ability, but because school has no connection to anything of value in their lives or in their vision of the future.[4]

Rather than more uniformity, we believe there must be more diversity, not only in **how** ***students are taught, but*** **where** ***and*** **by whom** ***they are taught as well.*** Schools cannot expect all students to learn in the same way, and America cannot expect 100 percent of its young people to be able to complete 12 years of a rigorous academic program in traditional classroom settings. For the sake of all students, educators need to reach beyond the walls of their schools and classrooms to take advantage of the rich possibilities for learning available in their communities. There must be alternatives for those who need other modes of learning than those usually found in schools. These are especially necessary to help young people who already have failed in the schools and are unlikely to return to the scene of their defeat.

Our recommendation, however, is not limited to at-risk students. Many bright students, too often bored in traditional settings, would also flourish with more opportunities for individual growth and added responsibility. For all students, schools need to build more effective bridges to the adult world of work, family responsibility, and civic participation.

Therefore, our first objective, strengthening learning through alternative, school-based instructional methods, must not be the only one. ***The Commission also urges new consideration by state policymakers, school and community leaders of a variety of out-of-school learning possibilities which use the schools as the nexus of community-based programs and resources.*** **Some of these possibilities are described in the balance of this chapter.**

A MIX OF ACTION PROGRAMS

We recommend a *mix* of *action* programs. Both italicized words are important. We are convinced that sufficient knowledge exists to provide a base for constructive action and that we must not wait endlessly for definitive research to justify addressing our pressing needs. Yet we do not dogmatically assert that only one or two models for new structures for schooling exist. On the contrary, we favor a wide variety of experimentation and local innovation to create manifold opportunities for the growth and development of our youth population. No single approach can be recommended for everyone's needs in all times and places. No single approach is likely to generate the *volume* of new opportunities that we believe is needed to provide a better transition from school to work and to postsecondary education than now exists.

To repeat: ***We recommend that more communities experiment with multiple elements to construct an improved school-to-work system.*** Students should learn in schools *and* in the workplace *and* in other community settings. We are convinced that a combination of elements will work best to reduce further the dropout rate and, more important, to produce high school graduates who are more mature, more responsible, and more motivated to build better lives for themselves, their families and their communities.

The elements we discuss in the following pages are listed below. We would stress again that not every intervention will work equally well in every setting. Communities must perform careful self-assessments to determine which of these educational components are most appropriate for local adoption and adaptation.

Monitored Work Experience
- Cooperative Education
- Internships
- Apprenticeship
- Pre-Employment Training
- Youth-Operated Enterprises

Community and Neighborhood Service
- Individual Voluntary Service
- Youth-Guided Services

Redirected Vocational Education

Incentives
- Guaranteed Postsecondary and Continuing Education
- Guaranteed Jobs
- Guaranteed Training

Career Information and Counseling
- Career Information Centers
- Parents as Career Educators
- Improved Counseling and Career Orientation
- Community Mentors and Community-Based Organizations

School Volunteers

MONITORED WORK EXPERIENCE

With the notable exception of disadvantaged youth, especially minorities in central cities, most young people today have ample opportunity for obtaining work experience.[5] *We find that the major unmet needs are for more employment opportunities for at-risk youth and for better quality work experience and closer integration between work experience and schooling.*

Cooperative Education

Cynthia Parsons, former education editor of *The Christian Science Monitor*, has presented a strong case for cooperative education as a bridge between school and work for more or less all students.[6] Cooperative education, as distinguished from vocational education which teaches job skills in classroom settings, weaves together alternate periods of classroom instruction and paid or unpaid work experience. The work is as nearly related to the student's academic studies and career goals as possible.

Most evaluations of high school vocational education conclude that it has generally failed to meet its promise to prepare young people for employment and that a major reason for that failure is the inadequacy of schools as settings for learning job skills. (A notable exception is business or office-skills education, the proficient graduates of which find ready employment.)[7] Job site training is much more effective, claim most evaluators and employers. Workplace equipment, procedures, and operators are up-to-date. Moreover, they teach more efficiently and effectively than classroom lectures such critical lessons as appropriate dress, business manners, punctuality, and reliability—the work maturity skills. These are learned rapidly on the job because the learners are more directly motivated. These are some of the many benefits potentially available through cooperative education.

A major difficulty with cooperative education is that generalized skills are too often neglected in favor of the specialized skills needed by the particular employer with whom the student is training. This makes the student less able to go out into the job market and negotiate with another employer whose needs may be different. Multiple placements lessen this problem and increase the need for close cooperation between schools and the business community.

Cooperative education has been most thoroughly institutionalized in the field of distributive education, which teaches about wholesale and retail commerce. Parsons found that vocational teachers in this field often could not imagine how they could teach without the extensive use of field placements for their students. Yet, in other vocational fields, cooperative education, work/study, and on-the-job training are much less common. Although exact statistics are impossible to find (even, it appears, for the number of students enrolled in vocational education!), no more than 10 percent of vocational students are reported as being involved in cooperative education. If vocational students constitute one-quarter of all high school students as is claimed, then the proportion of all students in cooperative education arrangements is about 2.5 percent.

The Commission finds that cooperative education's full potential has yet to be explored. We believe it to be appropriate and useful for many more high school students than are now exposed to it. Accordingly, we urge community and school leaders to accord it a "second look," for college-bound as well as non-college-oriented students.

Internships

Three programs provide well-developed models for workplace internships: Career Intern Program, Executive High School Internships, and Experience-Based Career Education. All three differ from cooperative education in being *unpaid* and in having broad career and orientation to work purposes, as opposed to specific career preparation.

The **Career Intern Program** was developed by the Opportunities Industrialization Council in Philadelphia, with support from the National Institute of Education. It was then disseminated to several other cities under the Youth Employment and Demonstration Projects Act (YEDPA) of 1977. A kind of alternative school, the program was aimed at disadvantaged dropouts and potential dropouts and intended both to broaden their knowledge of possible careers and to improve their basic skills. It began with academic classes oriented toward occupations, continued with supervised work experience in several jobs, and culminated in counseling and social services as students made the transition either to further education and training or to full-time employment. The program's formal continuation six months to a year after participants had gone on to work or further education was one of its most significant features.

Executive High School Internships was developed in New York City and then implemented in other city school systems. Neither a program for youths in trouble nor one designed to teach about a specific career, Executive High School Internships is a semester-long, full-time experience that takes the place of regular school classes. Interns are paired with various kinds of executives and have a chance both to assist their role models in real work and to learn from them. One of the internship's most distinctive features is a full-day seminar during which all interns meet to discuss their experiences and to work on academic projects related to their internships. This seminar is the operational link between experience in the workplace and school learning. A second feature which makes the seminar possible is the employment of a full-time teacher/coordinator for every 25 interns. This person is responsible for planning and leading the seminar and for overseeing all of the students' placements. While this student/teacher ratio may seem luxurious, because the program engages students full-time, it is actually consistent with conventional classroom ratios. Internship programs are too often thought of as low-budget add-ons to conventional schooling rather than as programs that need and deserve resources equivalent to those devoted to traditional classroom instruction.

Experience-Based Career Education (EBCE) was also developed by the National Institute of Education through four regional educational laboratories. As its title indicates, its purpose was career education, but in some versions it was used as a means of teaching practically the whole curriculum. Some students spent up to 80 percent of school time in their work placements for an entire year. Like Executive High School Internships, EBCE employs teacher/coordinators to supervise placements and lead seminars. Students typically complete projects relating their work experience to one or more academic subjects. Consistent with the purpose of exploring careers, students change placements rather frequently and choose from a wide range of blue-collar and white-collar jobs.

Apprenticeship

Apprentices are novices who serve under contract to master workers for prescribed periods of full-time employment to learn, through practical experience, a particular trade or to enter a specific skilled profession or guild. On- the-job training is usually coupled with serious academic studies over the lifetime of the program. Long practiced in Europe, especially in German-speaking countries, apprenticeship never really caught on in the New World, perhaps because it seemed too restrictive and paternalistic for a democratic society. More to the point, the demand for American labor has historically been great enough that extensive training was unnecessary to obtain entry-level employment leading to a skilled occupation.

Today, apprenticeship programs exist for only a small number of occupations, about half in the building trades. They are predominantly union-controlled and, despite recent efforts to overcome past discrimination, they enroll mostly white males. Apprenticeship also has proven appropriate for trades plied by independent workers who also run small businesses (e.g., plumbers, electricians, cabinetmakers).

Most critically for our inquiry, apprenticeship as it is generally practiced in the United States does not bridge school and work. Instead, apprenticeship programs, like primary labor market employers, favor applicants in their mid-twenties who already have experienced the floundering period. Less than five percent of America's high school graduates participate in apprenticeship within the first year following graduation; only 1-2 percent do so in the third year after graduation.[8]

West Germany's apprenticeship system enrolls half of all 15-18 year olds. Austria's and Switzerland's apprenticeships serve a third of their non-college youth. Some key elements of these apprenticeship systems are:

- Young people enter apprenticeship upon completion of full-time, compulsory schooling, usually at age 16.
- Apprentices continue their schooling part-time in close connection with their job specific training.
- Training occurs on-the-job, under real working conditions, and is *not* deemed a school responsibility.
- Schools limit themselves to achieving academic goals.
- Successful completion of training leads directly to a related career of prestige and significant earning power.

Apprenticeship deserves serious re-examination not only as an effective, if under-utilized, transition to work device, but also because of the coming decline in the youth population. Many industries may discover that they can assure a reliable supply of qualified entry-level workers only by establishing their own version of apprenticeship programs. In this way, these employers will ensure—as do European industrialists—that they have enough well-trained young workers to maintain and develop their businesses. They will need to team up with a local high school or nearby schools to give students part-time work opportunities during the school year and in the summer, to make skilled craftsmen available to the students and teachers as mentors, and to offer guarantees of future employment.

It is worth noting that many West Germans initially questioned the appropriateness of apprenticeship to modern industrial conditions. They concluded, however, that the kind of broad and deep training apprentices receive—combining work and thinking skills—is the ideal foundation for the flexible specialization increasingly demanded by new production processes and technologies. So the modern model of apprenticeship may have to break away from the old craft traditions into a more flexible definition of skills to be mastered, with more of the skills being intellectually based.

Apprenticeship has proven itself an effective transition-to-work alternative to that of 12 continuous years of academic instruction. We believe that it would appeal to many non-college-bound youth who now do poorly in traditional schooling but who could be personally empowered by a successful experience as an apprentice in a skilled profession. [redacted]

Apprenticeship should not be assumed to constitute a barrier to further education. As noted in Chapter 6 of this report, the United States already has in its community colleges and its large-scale employer-based training and education activities the beginning of a true system of lifelong learning. Rather than closing the door to the economic advancement that can come with further education, apprenticeship offers the chance to start working with realistic hopes for career advancement and without a destructive floundering period. That advancement can be undergirded by part-time education in numerous forms. Today's changing age group in college attendance speaks to the prospect of new and different combinations of work and education for the benefit of both individuals and society. We repeat that, for many youth, full-time academic work through age eighteen may not be the best route either to adulthood or to college.

As a variation of apprenticeships and similar structures, some have proposed starting school earlier and redesigning the last two years of high school. For example, former New York Commissioner of Education Gordon Ambach has suggested that school begin at age four for all children, rather than the current age six, and that alternatives be provided at age 16, by which time students would have acquired a foundation of basic skills and knowledge. These alternatives could include a continuation of the regular high school program, apprenticeships or other types of school/work transitions, or early admission to college. Alternatives such as these, in our view, deserve far more attention than they have thus far received by an American educational system that is far too standardized and routinized than true effectiveness and excellence demand.

Pre-Employment Training

> *. . . reform strategies for the educationally disadvantaged that focus on the school system alone will continue to fail these 'children in need.' We have learned from experience that effective strategies reaching beyond the traditional boundaries of schooling and providing early and sustained intervention in the lives of disadvantaged children can break this vicious cycle of despair.*
>
> *Each year's class of dropouts costs the nation more than $240 billion in lost earnings and foregone taxes over their lifetimes. Billions more will be spent on crime control, and on welfare, health care, and other social services. Every $1 spent on early prevention and intervention can save $4.75 in the costs of remedial education, welfare, and crime further down the road.*
>
> —Committee for Economic Development, *Children in Need*[9]

America has changed. A high school diploma is now a basic requisite for finding most jobs and for beginning virtually all careers. Recognizing that poor academic performance leads to dropping out and all its appalling social costs, America's schools have launched a variety of preventive interventions to enhance student retention and academic achievement. The growing literature of these efforts provides interested communities with a wealth of illustrations and "how-to" manuals on what has oved effective in reversing school dropout rates.[10] We shall cite a few of these efforts here.

Most dropout prevention programs emphasize school-to-work transition models, particularly a variety of pre-employment training activities. The key elements common to such efforts are:

- orientation to world-of-work experiences and training activities within the school context;

- close collaboration between the private sector and the schools—employers help to develop curricula, and provide trainers and job placements; community organizations provide outreach services and motivational support; and the schools give students academic credit for their training activities and include job counselor/trainers as part of their faculties;
- a linkage between school attendance and academic improvement with guaranteed job placement on graduation; and
- targeting services and attention to those most prone to becoming dropouts—the highest risk students.

The Boston Compact is probably the best known of these school-to-work programs. A number of other programs following similar patterns have been started in at least 30 other localities, including the Philadelphia and Palo Alto Academies, and the School-to-Work Action Programs (SWAP) in Richmond, Va., Albuquerque, New Mexico, and several other locations. Roanoke, Virginia (with Project Success) and New York City (its Dropout Prevention Program (DPP) is one of the largest non-federally funded efforts) are among those communities that use the school-to-work transition model in especially creative ways. New York City's DPP program includes a broad cross-section of the high schools that have high dropout rates, covering a large proportion of the city's economically disadvantaged youngsters.

The experiences of DPP in New York and the school-to-work programs elsewhere offer hints (but not yet hard evaluations) of how much can be gained by focusing on the job needs of at-risk youngsters within the school context. But they also reveal some of the significant difficulties these types of initiatives face.

Lack of adequate funding is one problem. The absence of adequate support and coordination from other youth training activities (such as those made available under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA)) severely restrict the number of youngsters who actually receive assistance, and undercut the goal of providing effective services to the most seriously at-risk youngsters. As with youth programs more generally, an enormous temptation exists to concentrate limited dollars and services on those most likely to be successfully placed in the shortest time. When only a small proportion of those needing assistance can be served in any case, those requiring more extensive assistance are "selected out." This approach, termed "creaming," deviates entirely from what research has found: **the most long-term benefits will accrue by concentrating efforts on the hardest to serve—youth who would be destined for chronic unemployment without the second chance for success offered by these programs.**[11]

There are an immense variety of dropout prevention and remediation programs in operation. Some initiatives assume that improvement of early childhood education is the best prevention measure; others focus upon secondary schools and special second-chance opportunities outside the regular schools. We have found much interesting analysis in this field, but no single strategy that works best for all students, perhaps because the causes of school failure are varied and not clearly understood. Promising avenues appear to emphasize personal connections between teachers and students as well as various modes of individualizing learning. The spectrum of activity runs from altering schools so that youngsters will find them more friendly places to trying to change youngsters themselves so that they will persist in the school as it is.

We support recent initiatives of the Congress to build upon the success in the early grades of **the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act** and to expand the compensatory education program to middle and senior high schools. This continuity of treatment approach, conscientiously and consistently applied, might well obviate the need for many special anti-dropout campaigns, often funded on a "crash basis" outside the regular school budget.

Designed and tested by Public/Private Ventures in Philadelphia, **Summer Training and Education Program (STEP)** is a relatively low-cost intervention for 14-15 year-old students who perform poorly in school. Enrollees are provided basic academic remediation, life skills (training designed to motivate youth to delay parenthood until they achieve basic educational and career goals), and paid work experience during two consecutive and intensive summer programs. Participants receive counseling and related support services during the intervening school year. STEP has stemmed summer learning losses—which affect at-risk youth far more than most youth—in reading and even reversed losses in mathematics. Further, sexually active youth in the program were found to be 53 percent more likely to use contraception than a control group of non-STEP participants. Enrollees' overall knowledge about the consequences of sexual activity was greatly enhanced, apparently through the effects of the carefully designed life skills curriculum and the preparation of those who teach it.

The cost of the entire STEP remediation is $1,600 per student over the 15-month life of the program. This does not include paid summer work which is supported under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) at about $700 per enrollee per summer.[12]

Beginning in the summer of 1987, all participating localities in the JTPA Summer Youth Employment Program are required to provide basic skills remediation as part of summer work activities for *at least some* of those among the estimated 613,000 participating youth who require it. This is most encouraging. The amount spent on remediation, and the number of participants who will receive it, remain at the discretion of each locality. However, this commitment to basic skills development as an essential element of training activities deserves to be widely emulated, and not just in the summer time. The STEP experience in remediation thus provides a fine example of how basic academic skills training can be incorporated into broader youth assistance efforts.

Another youth pre-employment program, also funded under JTPA and private sector donations, is **Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG)**. Unlike STEP, JAG does not tie paid work experience to its comprehensive pre-employment program. Now operating in 12 states, JAG serves approximately 11,000 high school students. Seventy percent of JAG participants are minorities; all are identified by participating schools as being at-risk of dropping out and of subsequent unemployment; about 53 percent are from low-income families.

The JAG program consists of instruction in 33 employment abilities, a motivational, vocationally oriented Student Career Association, and job development and placement assistance provided by a professional cadre of Job Specialists. Follow-up support is provided during the first nine months following high school graduation. Among the subjects studied are: career planning, decision making, job search and interviewing, job-keeping skills, work-relevant attitudes, basic academics, leadership, and personal development.

According to the most recent evaluations, JAG graduates were 60 percent more likely to be employed full-time than the non-participating control group. Black graduates were two-thirds more likely to hold full-time jobs. The Class of 1984 was followed up 20 months after graduation; JAG graduates averaged eight more weeks of employment than non-participants and earned $2,000, or 36 percent, more; black and Hispanic graduates earned $2,245, or 55 percent, more. Overall, the JAG job placement rate is about double that of non-participants. The Class of 1985, for example, reported a national employment rate of 87 percent; two states' graduates registered 91 percent placement. Cost per student placement averages $1,400, which is repaid in public benefits within 18 months.[13]

In summary, to realize its goals nationwide, the dropout prevention effort requires both additional funding and a wider use of the school-to-work transition model in schools suffering from the highest dropout rates. ***Our main finding is this: Enough is known for action; enough is known to salvage many thousands of young people before they become dropouts and likely dependents on costly public welfare programs.***

The notes to this section also testify that a considerable body of published knowledge about effective programs is available. Working models also exist for study and further evaluation. And a number of competent non-profit intermediary agencies stand ready to help interested communities to replicate successful programs or to develop their own approaches based upon the experience of others. No longer are communities alone; help is at hand.

Consideration of the dropout phenomenon and ways to combat it calls attention to an unnecessary rigidity in most of our state laws on school attendance. This is the notion that it should take 12 years—and no more—to earn a high school diploma. Students who need more time, perhaps because they are struggling to care for a child or because they need to work full-time to meet other family emergencies, are often stigmatized, made to feel unwanted, or even officially denied readmission. Their chances of successful completion of graduation requirements are thus severely limited. Because not all students are able to finish high school in a single four-year period, there should be a two-way path between school and work enabling young workers to continue their academic training until they graduate.

We believe it would be far more equitable and supportive of our youth's potential (and today's family realities) if states extended guarantees of free high school education to anyone, regardless of age, for as long as is reasonably required to meet graduation requirements. Instead of a "use it or lose it all by age 18" syndrome, youth would know that schools are flexible enough to accommodate their special circumstances. ***We urge state boards of education to consider whether their compulsory attendance laws and their practices in dealing with over age 18 students are*** [redacted] (This may mean the creation of new instructional settings, rather than returning the dropout to traditional classrooms which did not work before.)

Youth-Operated Enterprises

Some real limits inhibit the number and quality of opportunities for youth to take responsible "in-between" roles in ordinary business, industry, and service organizations. All of the programs tried to date have been relatively small in scale. So it remains to be seen how many youth can be accommodated as we move toward making this kind of experience more widely available. Furthermore, young people are inevitably limited in what they can take charge of in a large, on-going organization. Even interns paired with executives spend a fair amount of time doing routine work that requires little special knowledge or expertise.

One way to make employment training programs more effective for disadvantaged youth is to design them to place youth in dramatically different roles. Most second-chance programs segregate at-risk youth in groups and keep them in a relatively subordinate status. Thus, their experience is identical in many respects to their isolated and/or segregated experience in schools and in their neighborhoods. When such youth establish and operate their own businesses, however, they must necessarily act as leaders and take responsibilities that they may never before have thought they could handle. This experience has the potential of drastically raising young people's aspirations and expectations for themselves. In addition, they learn business knowledge and skills at a higher level than they would need in an entirely adult-run organization.

Managerial and entrepreneurial learning can be an important first step to a career as a manager or business owner. Such learning can also be important for workers at lower levels of a business. While large corporations employ the majority of workers in the private sector, they are not net creators of new jobs. Small businesses are the major job generators in the American economy. Training in entrepreneurship could, therefore, have multiple payoffs: stimulating a new generation of entrepreneurs, instilling in small business employees an understanding and appreciation of what it means to found and maintain a successful small business, and creating real businesses which can provide new and sustaining employment.

Junior Achievement (JA) has provided such training for years, sometimes in connection with distributive education programs and sometimes independently of schools. Its most signal accomplishment has been to marshal support from businesspeople in many communities to help youth learn about how a business functions. While not designed originally for disadvantaged youth, it has recently begun to reach in this direction. Nor is JA supposed to result in continuing enterprises. Each business is usually liquidated at the end of the year.

Another approach to entrepreneurship has just begun in Ithaca, New York, where Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream has granted a franchise to The Learning Web, a youth program. With assistance from an adult manager and Learning Web staff, employees are moving beyond scooping ice cream into all phases of the store's operation. Student-workers participate in profit-sharing. The plan is to enable those youth who have demonstrated sufficient interest and commitment to move into managerial roles while allowing others simply to gain short-term work experience in a supportive environment. Ultimately, too, the store may supply a portion of its parent youth organization's financial support.

Whatever the character of the enterprise, it is essential that adult entrepreneurs be involved as role models to assist individual youth-run businesses. Community-wide enterprise advisory councils, possibly including the Senior Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), may also be a good idea in localities where they could offer critical technical assistance and help in raising venture capital. The involvement and support of adults—ingredients this Commission believes essential to maximize responsible youth participation in society—are vital to their success.

COMMUNITY AND NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICE

Individual Voluntary Service

The limited number of "in-between" roles for students in workplaces provides a practical reason for considering unpaid community service as a complement to paid work and cooperative education, as well as unpaid internships in workplaces. As has often been remarked in relation to various National Youth Service proposals, America has much work to do but not enough jobs. The philosophical rationale for service is that ***young people need experience not only as workers but especially as citizens.*** Undue emphasis on paid employment impoverishes education and may hamper personal and intellectual development. Just as we should not expect young people to take a single long step from being full-time students to being full-time workers, we should not expect them to be transformed overnight at age 18 from passive recipients of society's beneficence to active and concerned citizens.

The Commission recommends that the experience of service to the community ought to be vigorously promoted as a third element to supplement schooling and work.

> *"Everybody can be great because everybody can serve."*
>
> Martin Luther King, Jr.

The triad of education/employment/service can help our young people to develop a greater sense of personal worth and a better understanding of the obligations of citizenship. Our youth would come to understand—through study, through paid employment, and through voluntary service to others—that life is a process of both giving and getting. They would come to understand that democracy is a social compact in which society nurtures and cares for its young. And the young, as early as practicable, would fulfill their obligation to serve others, to help them build a more caring, compassionate, and competent society. By engaging in activities that are important to adults, young people would not be seen, or see themselves, as dependents or as mere takers from parents, families, and the community. Rather, they would become contributors, problem-solvers, and partners with adults in creating a better society for all, young and old alike.

Expanding community and neighborhood service by youth will require a new national commitment to voluntarism. It requires a shift in national consciousness toward the kind of social compact just described. New and cumbersome bureaucratic structures should neither be necessary nor allowed. The new national consciousness we advocate would not be monolithic, but rather, would be expressed through thousands of diverse, locally determined, and locally created youth service opportunities. States, cities, counties, communities, school districts, individual schools, and even city neighborhoods would assess their needs and design their own programs and projects. Youth, as potential service providers, should have a large role in designing the projects on which they will work.

These diverse activities would be unified by certain common aims:

- improving the quality of life for all the inhabitants of the area served;
- strengthening intergenerational connections among children, youth, and adults;
- providing youths from diverse backgrounds and economic levels with shared experiences as part of the American nation;
- integrating service opportunities with existing (preferably improved!) educational services and labor markets.

In particular, service programs should include substantial opportunities for reflection and deeper understanding. These would allow participants not only to act but also to consider the meaning and value of the service experience for themselves, for those who are served, and for society at large. (While schools are the most logical place for such activity, community organizations, churches, and youth groups could also offer such opportunities.)

State and local design and operation of service opportunities are essential. Federal support for the concept of community service is also vital and could take such forms as:

- National leadership from "the bully pulpit" of the Oval Office and the Cabinet. The influence of the presidency, cabinet secretaries, and other leading national figures should not be underestimated. The shift in national consciousness we seek can also be powerfully aided by other leadership, including that of the states, the sports and entertainment industries, the media which cover government, and other trend setters.

- Technical assistance and information clearinghouse functions to aid local service opportunities. These could be performed by a federal agency such as ACTION, by a federally chartered, independent corporation governed by a decisive majority of state and local sponsors of service opportunities, or by agencies in the independent sector with federal and philanthropic financial assistance.
- A federal program of modest financial incentives to encourage states and communities to establish their own service opportunities.

Overall, we propose a highly diverse, creative series of local initiatives bound together by a non-bureaucratic national identity, and serving two major purposes:

- Citizenship education, bringing together both poor and privileged youth to develop a service-oriented, lifelong commitment to others;
- Exposure to fundamental social needs that are the common civic obligation of all of us. We believe, for example, that early participation in community service is one of the best ways to help young people to understand the central roles played throughout American society by the voluntary agencies of the independent sector. Young people need structured opportunities to give back to the community as well as to take from it.

In most familiar forms of voluntary service, the young person works in a service agency operated by adults—a hospital, day-care center or old age home, for example. Except that the work is a form of service and undertaken voluntarily, it resembles internships and cooperative education. It has many of the same advantages with the added benefit of instilling commitment to voluntary service.[14] Moreover, most community service placements promote generic employability skills, e.g., punctuality, team work, following directions, accepting responsibility, exercising initiative, etc. Thus, community service trains both for work and for effective citizenship.

In summary, youth service should be designed with three overarching goals in mind: (1) to provide a needed extra dimension to growing up, (2) to set standards for youth service as high as they are for academic pursuits; (3) to include *all our youth*. Such an approach requires a commitment of money, time, good ideas, and creative personnel that researchers concerned with strong service programs equate with the resources available to football coaches.

In-school coordinators of service programs need administrative support, training, and an enthusiasm for their assignment. Students need not only valuable experiences, but time and means for reflection so that service becomes a lifelong value, not merely a course credit completed.

Finally, youth service opportunities should be designed to bring young people together, rather than to segregate them. For example, youth service corps programs, local or statewide, could be structured to provide racial and economic balance. When this is not feasible, opportunities should exist for young people participating in service programs to come together and share information and attitudes about their experiences with their peers in other service programs.

Youth-Guided Services

Just as youth-operated, for-profit enterprises can supplement work experience, youth-operated service projects can expand the range of service experiences available to young people. They can also give young people opportunities now too rare to develop their planning, problem-solving, decisionmaking, and managerial skills.

A catalog of youth-guided (and, preferably, youth-designed) unpaid or fee-for-services is beyond brief description. But ideas which we commend to the consideration of youth and community leaders include:

• tutorial and monitoring services for younger children, as well as for peers • shopping services for the elderly, shut-ins or the disabled • lawn and minor house and apartment maintenance • snow removal • renovation of vacant lots for recreational and aesthetic purposes • visiting with, escorting and reading to the isolated and lonely • varied assistance in day-care centers, old-age homes, hospitals, hospices, clinics • litter-control and beautification projects • voter registration and voter reminder campaigns • painting murals instead of graffiti • food and clothing drives for the needy and the homeless • fundraising for scholarship funds or other local philanthropies • youth bands and singing groups for performance at public and private occasions • youth troupes to visit primary schools to discuss or perform plays on problems (e.g. substance abuse, pregnancy, suicide, sexual abuse, etc.) * blood-bank drives * crime prevention services (e.g., neighborhood and school watches, escort services, youth guards and police auxiliaries, inspection of homes for safety and security, etc.)

Projects such as these should be decentralized, neighborhood-controlled and directed. Youths should serve alongside adult volunteers and public officials charged with the provision of local services. The keys to the success of these projects will be local imagination and origination, genuine responsibility of youth for their operation, appropriate adult technical expertise, continuity of adult encouragement, and recognition from the neighborhood and community at large.

REDIRECTED VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

> *General education is the best preparation for effective individual functioning and responsible citizenship. . . . Vocational education, including guided work experience, is an essential, not merely an elective, part of general education. . . . This means that vocational education is for all students, not just an alternative to academic studies for the less academically oriented. I want the college bound students to include vocational studies too, just as I want to be sure that students not going to college secure a balanced program in academic subjects. . . . The issue is . . . what kind of education contributes most to economic competence and satisfaction in work and life.*
>
> John A. Goodlad, *A Place Called School*[15]

Vocational education enjoys a peculiar status in American education. It is the only part of the secondary school curriculum that has consistently been supported by federal funds for 70 years, a condition reflecting the expectation that it contributes uniquely to the economic strength of the nation. Yet, that contribution has been quite difficult to demonstrate empirically. Generally, benefits to vocational graduates in the labor market are variously reported as small, unreliable, or nonexistent.[16] For the most part, employers find that job-specific training is taught better on the job or in specialized, postsecondary institutions than it is in high school classrooms that must often make do with outdated machinery and methods. And, as we have repeatedly noted, employers are loathe to hire young people fresh out of high school for career opportunity positions. Instead, they tend to look for the sound work habits, basic skills, and good interpersonal and communication skills they need among those who are older and more experienced.

Exceptions, however, do exist. In some outstanding programs, local employers supply equipment, supervision, and virtually guarantee jobs. Graduates of clerical programs in typing and related skills that easily transfer to business settings are quickly hired as well.

Vocational education also appears to reduce dropping out, even though vocational students are more likely to leave school before graduation than college preparatory or general track students. This seeming paradox results from the tendency of potential dropouts to transfer into the vocational track as a last resort, often when it is already too late. Nevertheless, many other at-risk students who have stayed in school have testified that had it not been for their vocational courses, they too would have dropped out. While not a panacea for all youth, vocational education can be an effective prevention strategy for some.

Many students find they learn basic skills and retain academic facts and concepts far more easily when they are built into active, work-related learning experiences. They enjoy working in smaller groups with the same students for half of the day and often thrive on the special attention that teachers in these more personal settings are able to give. Perhaps most important, many at-risk students in vocational classes are motivated to do well because they can see the connection between what they are learning in school and their future success in the real world.

This applied approach does not mean that students should be denied contact with significant literature or the opportunity to learn more than the most practical writing skills. Young people, who understand the importance of carefully reading instructions to fill out an insurance claim or work permit and will work hard to do so, can also be helped to see how reading, writing, and talking about *The Color Purple*, for example, can help them think about the complexity in their own lives and begin to handle some of the problems they face. In the best of current high school vocational education programs, this is precisely what happens. Instructors rely on a variety of applied and experiential teaching methods to teach courses, a large proportion of which are academic, rather than vocational, in content.

We remain convinced that even though vocational education does not excel in preparing students for most *specific* kinds of work, if redirected, it can offer an even more valuable preparation: a unique and effective way for many students to acquire the basic skills and general abilities they will need to be successful in a wide range of endeavors. We agree with John Dewey that the fundamental purpose of [vocational] education should not be to provide narrow occupational training but to link education with adult life. [redacted]

INCENTIVES

Any combination of the foregoing proposals, if implemented thoroughly, would require young people to work harder. Consistent with recent school reform efforts, we agree that higher standards and greater demands on youth are needed. At the same time, it is reasonable to ask, both with respect to demands in school and demands for work and service: "What's in it for the youth?" An answer couched solely in terms of general benefits to their education and development is unlikely to be highly motivating.

Incentives are needed. It would be a mistake, however, to think of these only as immediate rewards, such as money, novel experience, interesting learning, and social interaction. If adolescents' future prospects do influence their current behavior, then tying greater demands for work and service to post-high school opportunities should be an effective incentive.

Cleveland is trying an old form of motivation: cash. Because half of its students do not currently complete high school, it is willing to risk grade inflation and teacher bribery to change that statitistic. Students in grades 7-12 will receive $40 for each A, $20 for each B, and $10 for each C, all usable in pursuing postsecondary education studies. This corporation and local foundation-funded incentive program also promises preferential hiring of all high school graduates.

Two current efforts demonstrate the value of future opportunities as incentives: Eugene Lang's promise of higher education to the students of New York City's P.S. 121 who graduate from high school and the Boston Compact. The Boston Compact is a widely publicized partnership between Boston's public schools and local businesses, industries, colleges, and unions. In addition to increasing communication and sharing resources among those institutions, its most visible aspect is an incentive agreement guaranteeing jobs, higher education, and employment training to successful graduates of Boston high schools.

Guaranteed Postsecondary and Continuing Education

New York businessman's Eugene Lang's "I Have A Dream" foundation to finance the college education of every member of the sixth grade class of the elementary school he had attended in New York City has been justly celebrated and more recently replicated there and in more than 20 other communities, including Dallas, Boston, and the District of Columbia.

The educational and broader societal implications of Lang's incentive program are far more dramatic than the financial bounties. The young people's school and neighborhood virtually predestined them to drop out of school, engage in criminal behavior, use drugs, and have babies out of wedlock. Although they, their parents, and their teachers surely hoped for better, most of their older siblings and neighbors had given up their dreams for the harsh realities of life in East Harlem. Their own chances were hardly encouraging.

But someone told them they could do better. Lang would give them the money they did not have—and, far more important, his own time and counsel and that of additional caring adults—so they could begin to imagine the unimaginable: gaining admission to a four-year college. All they had to do was to graduate from high school with an adequate academic record and to avoid the kind of trouble that would make it impossible to go to college. And they are doing it. Most of them were sufficiently motivated to resist the temptations that had ensnared their less fortunate predecessors. Even those who did succumb seem to have a good chance of overcoming the barriers they encountered. As of June 1987, 48 of 51 students who accepted Mr. Lang's challenge in grade 6 have graduated or are expected to do so; 25 of the 27 June 1987 graduates have been admitted to college.[17]

Certainly, a Hawthorne effect is at work here: the phenomenon in which people tend to be happier and more productive simply because they have been given special attention. Undoubtedly, some of that effect would be attenuated if equivalent opportunities were available as a matter of course to all. Most important, we stress again, Lang did not stop by offering a financial incentive but went on to become a mentor and an advocate for his adopted class. He hired a professional counselor to do the same on a daily basis—to provide tutoring, advice, and help to solve personal and academic problems. These extra supports demonstrate what is needed to make a difference in young people's expectations of themselves. Along with motivation to achieve, they need adult support.

What is most impressive and most promising about Lang's remarkable gesture is the finality with which it refutes pessimistic theories about the origins of poverty and underachievement. These young people had family backgrounds, including genetic endowments, no different from any other group of disadvantaged youth. Yet they responded with exemplary effort and achievement when they were provided with regular and caring support and given a firm understanding that an important personal goal was achievable by dint of their own performance.

Guaranteed Jobs

The Boston Compact secures pledges from local business and industry to hire high school graduates with a satisfactory grade point average. About one-third of the graduating class of 1986 found jobs through the Boston Compact, many in banks, insurance companies, and hospitals. Their wages averaged $5.43 per hour. Moreover, more than 90 percent of young workers either remained in their jobs or returned to school.[18]

One caution about the exportability of this approach: Boston has enjoyed an economic renaissance in recent years with little unemployment. Hence, it is likely that high school graduates would have been hired even without the Compact's guarantee. It remains to be seen what will happen to such an agreement if Boston's economy declines, or when a similar approach is tried in other cities with a smaller demand for labor. It will also be important to monitor the types of jobs youth receive under the plan and the extent to which those jobs function as portals to true careers. However, even if a guarantee can only be made during good the labor market.

Guaranteed Training

Employer participants in the Boston Compact have agreed to train high school graduates; they have promised the same training they normally give their older employees. Unions have also set aside a number of apprenticeship places for Boston high school graduates. Considering that apprenticeship is ordinarily limited to young men in their mid-twenties, simply opening apprenticeship training to 18 year-olds is a notable innovation. These strategies have the important effect of helping youth to avoid the "floundering" discussed earlier.

The number of communities which have expressed interest in replicating the Boston Compact suggests that this approach is feasible in many locations. Its feasibility comes in part from the relatively small changes it requires by participants. As in Boston, it is likely that many of the guarantees promised through such programs will simply make definitive opportunities that were previously only probable. In terms of the need for adolescents to see a clear connection between their current activities and future prospects, that explication and confirmation of opportunities is essential, not merely public relations.

The tremendous variety of possibilities open to high school graduates for education, employment, and training is at once a blessing and a curse. It embodies the promise of choice and opportunity that is central to our national self-image. But because many young people are not aware of available opportunities, the fragmentation of the system and the invisibility of the opportunities work against the disadvantaged, who are also the least informed. Because they do not see the opportunities, they do not believe they exist. Merely clarifying what the opportunities are and specifying how to gain access turns them into incentives where none had previously existed.

Our community college system illustrates this principle. With accessible locations, low or no tuition, fees combined with federal student aid programs to pay them, and minimal entrance requirements, community colleges make higher education and continuing education available to almost everyone who wishes to enroll. But when young people do not know about costs, about financial aid, and about where courses in community colleges can lead them, then the existence of those colleges is an insufficient spur to achievement.

Ideally, information about college should come as early as sixth or seventh grade, when students must begin to choose courses that will keep their postsecondary options open, and when parents, who never attended college, can be awakened to the fact that their children can do so.

CAREER INFORMATION AND COUNSELING

The need to know about future prospects highlights the importance of improving young people's access to information and counseling regarding future careers. Four approaches are proposed to this end: career information centers, parents as career educators, the wider and more effective use of school counselors, and community mentors.

Career Information Centers

The number of distinct job titles found in business, industry, government, and social service is enormous. The proportion of titles that account for young people's chosen career targets is miniscule. Schools have been effectively segregated from adult life. Suburbs are geographically separated from parents' workplaces. Youth jobs are generally found in a restricted set of occupations and often do not bring their occupants into contact with many adults. Disadvantaged youth are acquainted with family and neighbors in only a narrow range of jobs, seriously distorting their perception of the occupational hierarchy and reducing their access to the opportunities. Many aspire to high status professions (doctor, lawyer, athlete, minister, scientist, entertainer) but believe that, if they are unable to achieve that aspiration, they must settle for cleaning houses or being a night watchman. Most adolescents simply have never heard of the potentially attractive middle-range jobs with career ladders. At-risk youth, in particular, need to know more about demanding and reasonably-paid occupations that offer accessible avenue of upward mobility. (How many young people—or adults, for that matter—know that entry-level wages in the U.S. Postal Service exceed $10 per hour, with excellent fringe benefits and definite opportunities for career advancement?) Young women, especially in isolated rural areas, also need more role models to help raise their aspirations.

The proposals above for expanding monitored work experience and community service activities provide some practical opportunities for increasing career awareness. Reading about careers is no substitute for direct experience and observation. However, first-hand experience cannot reveal more than a small part of the spectrum of occupations. Thus, written, audio, visual, and computerized information about careers is essential. Career information centers of some sort are required for this purpose. Although schools are one possible location for such centers, they may not be ideal. It may prove effective to house career centers in public libraries, church basements, storefronts, or community learning centers, as well as in the schools. It is crucial that the information also be available during non-school hours and that it be located where young people who may already have dropped out of school, or who are reluctant to show their interest during school hours, can visit without calling attention to their concerns. Looking for career information is unlikely to be viewed as "cool". Therefore, it should be possible for young people to drop in easily, preferably in a setting where "cool" activities are also in progress.

One impressive model which we commend to the attention of educators and community leaders is the New York City Job and Career Center.[19] Started by another generous Lang-like figure, Irving Kahn, the center serves the entire New York City public and private school population, as well as dropouts and unemployed adults. The Center uses loft space and career counselors provided by the N.Y. State Department of Labor. Young people, usually taking part in class-sized field trips, have an opportunity to learn about available post-high school jobs from exhibits and visual displays and from discussions with representatives of the City's major employers. A variety of career information as well as videotaped simulated job interviews are also provided to the visitors. Every city should be able to mount one or more career centers like this one. And critical functions like this should not depend for permanent financing on private generosity. This is a municipal service deserving of public support at the city or state level.

Parents as Career Educators

Contrary to the stereotype of adolescence as a time of rebellion, against parents in particular, studies of ordinary adolescents have found that they respect their parents' opinions more than anyone else's on important matters such as educational and career plans.[20] (It is their parents' opinions on such topics as popular music, clothing styles, and what time to come home at night that they dispute!) Thus, parents can be a crucial conduit of career information. Unfortunately, parents' attitudes and knowledge about employment is strongly influenced by their own limited experience. Hence, parents who have high-status jobs may be qualified to give their children advice on how to prepare for and secure such jobs, but children of the poor do not share a similar advantage. Less successful parents are poorly equipped to boost their children above their own occupational status. We believe this is especially true of many young mothers, whose own development and occupational chances were cut short.

Programs to increase parents' interest in and knowledge of careers for their children could be offered by a variety of institutions, including Career Information Centers and the public schools. Such initiatives can help to overcome parents' lack of information and indirectly improve young people's knowledge and planning ability concerning potential career goals. Therefore, ***we heartily endorse the Committee for Economic Development's call for education for both mothers and fathers to improve "the curriculum of the home."***[21]

Improved Counseling and Career Orientation

School counseling is the wailing wall of American education. It is a perennial target for criticism by both insiders and outsiders. Outsiders complain that it is ineffective, biased, and a waste of money. Insiders complain that the number of students per counselor and the weight of non-counseling administrative duties render their task impossible. Even school counselors admit that too much of their time today is spent on paperwork, primarily in those schools with large numbers of college-bound youth. Counseling for other students and for other reasons does not receive enough attention. Among youth-serving and social service agencies, and in some high schools, a new type of counselor is emerging. Under various titles, this new "student assistance personnel" category includes those especially trained to deal with drug and alcohol dependency, runaways, and other self-defeating social behaviors.

Short of a new profession, there are at least three other options for change. One would be to commit the resources required to pay for enough counselors to meet all students' needs. This would require at least double the current number of counselors—and probably a large number of administrative aides as well to help both the counselors and the principals who now depend on them to perform many administrative chores.

Second, there could be a redefinition of teachers' roles, accompanied by retraining and reduction in teaching loads, so that classroom teachers could assume a larger role in handling the counseling needs of high school students. The professional counselor's role, under this plan, would be to train and assist teachers in their counseling and to provide direct counseling in situations the teachers could not handle.[22]

A third approach would be to abandon the whole idea of school counselors and to locate counselors elsewhere, in neighborhood social service centers or labor offices, for example. (West Germany explicitly forbids teachers to give career counseling, reserving that task by law to officials in a well-developed network of labor offices.)

The College Board's Commission on Precollege Guidance and Counseling in its recent report, *Keeping the Options Open*,[23] suggests additional alternatives. As a first step, they recommend that local school districts develop a broad-based planning process, actively involving home, school, and community members, to determine the diverse counseling needs of students in each school. In turn, district-wide plans would provide funding and technical support to encourage similar efforts in individual schools throughout their jurisdiction.

The College Board Commission points out that it is unlikely that any school will ever have enough professionally trained counselors to do all that is required. It suggests, however, that some counseling functions can be fulfilled by others under the supervision and coordination of professionals. To that end, school principals should develop programs in which counselors orchestrate all guidance activities—in and out of school—and provide liaison among students, schools, families, and the community. **Advocating better-trained counselors and earlier intervention, the Commission supports stronger partnerships between home and school to increase two-way communication about student progress and better collaboration among schools, community agencies, colleges, businesses, and other community resources to enhance services for students.** ***We support these recommendations of the College Board Commission.***

One model for providing counseling services within the school is especially worthy of mention. New York City, along with Boston and several other jurisdictions that use the school-to-work approach for training the dropout prone and keeping them in school, employs job training specialists in schools with especially high dropout rates. Ten schools are presently using this model in New York as part of its Dropout Prevention Program. These job specialists are treated as regular faculty members rather than as "outside" job trainers or counselors. In addition to counseling, they help students locate part-time jobs during the school year and full-time placements in the summer and after graduation. They also organize and coordinate all other job-related services, develop training curricula with employers, and serve as regular links with the business community.

This approach is especially promising because it opens a new way to deal with the employment needs of youngsters who would like to work instead of going to college. Most educators acknowledge that schools are largely oriented toward serving the college-bound in their counseling activities. Comparable planning, orientation, and placement support are not made available to those planning to join the workforce after graduation. Doing more to meet these largely overlooked needs, especially for those most likely to lose interest in school because they do not contemplate an academic future, can make a major contribution toward widening the opportunities available to these youngsters and to keeping them in school until graduation.

New York City school administrators estimate that it costs $3,000 per school annually to have this type of job specialist assigned on at least a part-time basis. That figure is low as it assumes extensive use of teachers already on the faculty. This is not the best way to provide these services. Training and hiring of an entirely new type of professional, with skills that few teachers now possess, would be better, in our view.

All of these proposals are costly and difficult to put into practice. Still, if we are serious about helping young people to understand the world of work, each community will need to explore which of these approaches—or others—can be implemented in place of the current paucity of reliable counseling and information services.

Community Mentors and Community-Based Organizations

The section on monitored work experience discussed a role for youth as interns or apprentices in adult workplaces with a reciprocal role for adults as mentors. One function of a mentor is to provide career information and advice. Young people observe and ask questions about careers quite naturally in connection with participation in the workplace and informal interactions with adults. If information is simultaneously available about a broader range of careers, as in a neighborhood or city-wide career information center, then mentors can be very effective and efficient sources of career information.

Among the many mentoring programs designed to fulfill this purpose is the Transition to Working Life (TWL) program developed by the Grubb Institute in London, England. Unlike most mentoring programs, which stress a one-to-one relationship, TWL matched an adult worker with a small group of 8-10 unemployed youths. The adults' employers agreed to pay them for half a day per week to act as "working coaches." They would meet their group of youth, usually in the workplace, to talk about the weather, soccer, the royal family, and about work, education, and what it means to be an adult. Each working coach reported to an advisor, a professional in the social services, who helped the coach to understand his or her role and to perform it more effectively. The program proved cost-effective, even under abysmal labor market conditions, and was selected for wider replication.[24]

Many of the more successful school-to-work transition programs in our own country use a similar mentor approach as a key part of the broad range of world-of-work and training experiences they provide. The Boston Compact, for example, brings business mentors into the schools as instructors, and encourages them to play very active roles in the training and job experiences of participants. The "adopt-a-school" concept, in which a business forms close ties with an individual high school and its students, is another variant of the mentor approach that is used extensively by the Boston Compact and other school-to-work projects. Such arrangements provide an invaluable link to the business world for many disadvantaged youngsters, who lack the ready-made network of employment contacts that parents provide middle-class youth.

Many effective dropout prevention programs use community-based organizations to contact potential dropouts and to support their job training activities. Project Success in Roanoke, Virginia, and the Dropout Prevention Program in New York City, for example, rely extensively on community groups to provide many essential counseling and supportive services. These groups have a unique capability to reach disadvantaged youth and to keep them involved with school and training activities. Community groups have direct and continuing access and familiarity with the youngsters, their families, and their neighborhoods, which schools may lack. Many youth who distrust or lack interest in schools may be reached through community groups. National Urban League, National Puerto Rican Forum, SER-Jobs for Progress, ASPIRA, and Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America are examples of the kinds of national community-based organizations we have in mind.

In recent years, the role of community-based groups in providing employment and training assistance has tended to shrink, in part because of budget cuts, and in part because questions have been raised about the quality of their efforts. But **where effective community groups exist, they should be given a much larger role in dealing with the employment and training needs of high-risk youth.**

SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS

Another proven way to break down school-community-workplace barriers and isolation is to bring volunteers into the schools and to enable students (of all ages) to work with citizen volunteers/mentors (of all ages) as a regular part of the school experience. While tutoring is the most common form of school volunteer activity, adults are needed even more generally, as friends and mentors, opening up career horizons and helping our young to master the various dilemmas of living in a stressful age.

Some 4.3 million Americans provide an estimated 215 million hours of volunteer services annually to our nation's school children. Their voluntary contributions represent a huge in-kind contribution to the educational system (at $8 an hour, the average compensation for a beginning teacher's aide, the cash equivalent of today's volunteers' contributions exceeds $1.7 billion per year). More important, volunteers are an excellent way to involve more citizens in support of their community's schools. Youth, too, can find volunteer tutoring a highly satisfying supplement to regular school experiences, whether it is conducted informally or formally, as part of a community service program. Research has found such peer tutoring to be extremely effective for the tutee, and even more for the tutor's mastery of the subject matter. (Obviously, working mothers are less able to participate in community activities than their counterparts of 20 years ago who were far less likely to be employed outside the home.)

Education and political authorities need to be aware of the vast potential of volunteer programs for better instruction and for mobilizing community and political support for the schools by breaking down the isolation which makes so many educators—and children—feel alone and unneeded.[25] While the political potential of school volunteer programs for emerging school-community partnerships has yet to be sufficiently recognized, we are heartened by the Committee for Economic Development's timely recommendations in this regard:

> *Business should promote employee participation in local school district activities, and they should encourage qualified corporate leaders and managers to take an active role in the local and state policy-making process through participation on school boards.*
>
> *Business should also support the involvement of parents, a key factor in student success, in their children's education. We recommend that corporations provide release time and flexible schedules for employees who must attend to their children's educational needs or who want to serve their local school system as volunteers. Such corporate support is especially important for hourly and other nonmanagerial employees who are limited in their ability to arrange time to attend teacher conferences or participate in school functions without being penalized on the job.*[26]

The value of volunteers raises broader questions than those of providing additional options and resources for youths. Beyond what must be done to assure adequate paid employment, we believe that society should give serious attention to the growth of unpaid work. America has always been blessed with a unique attachment to the importance of volunteerism and voluntary action. No other society depends so greatly for important tasks on the unpaid and willing contributions of so many of its private citizens. As our population ages and as more Americans than ever have time, energy, and a wealth of experience to contribute, voluntarism can be a more valuable national resource than ever. At the same time, we as a society need to inquire whether our independent voluntary sector is as healthy, vigorous, and well-equipped as it might be to enhance the most productive efforts and programs for volunteers.

ON THE NEED FOR PAID EMPLOYMENT

Thus far, we have stressed what we believe are effective ways for society to improve the school-work transition for more of our youth through a variety of educational and service activities and support services. At the same time, we recognize that many young people require *paid* employment to meet family obligations, to save money for postsecondary education, for spending money, or to start an enterprise of their own. Therefore, communities pursuing any of the recommended school-work transition measures should *also* devise comprehensive programs to:

- provide full-time, part-time, and summer paid employment opportunities;
- offer job-referral and placement services; preparation in job-seeking, job-holding, and job-changing skills; and on-the-job counseling. These services should expose young people to a variety of career options, help to reduce youth unemployment, upgrade work competence, and enhance future upward job mobility;
- ensure adequate financial assistance for future education and training. As part of a community service program, for example, sponsors might offer stipends, deferred credit toward future education or savings plans and bonuses redeemable at a later date, as enlistment in the Armed Forces now provides. (See the discussion in Chapter 6 of Individual Education Accounts.) Successful completion of a term of community service, or a written commitment to serve for a stipulated period of time in the future, might also be considered by the Congress and the states in awarding what are now considered entitlements, e.g., Pell Grants, or in establishing eligibility for state and federal student loans and other financial aids.

The essential point to remember is that many youth *need* to work. Therefore, education reforms, community service, or other measures that do not take into account these young people's financial requirements are not likely to be totally successful. Students who need to work should not be penalized. Rather, *schools and communities should work together to provide jobs which enhance student learning and social development.* Schools and communities also need to think carefully about the still-unresolved question of when the nature and quantity of paid employment interfere with students' primary responsibility, which is unequivocally, to learn that which schools are best equipped to teach.

For all young people, we urge expanded options in the triad of education/service/paid employment as the best route to developing the intellectual and social skills which will best serve both them and our society.

If America hopes to stay competitive in the world market, we have only two choices: either we "work cheaper," increasing production at lower wages, or we "work smarter," improving the quality and kinds of goods and services we produce. The first is not a real alternative—reducing wage levels to a point where we could compete with Third World producers would only bring a corresponding decrease in quality of life—a no-win situation on all fronts. We choose the second option. By providing more ways for young people to learn and develop a sense of mastery and competence, and by creating better networks for job training and future employment, in-school and community-based education can begin a new spiral of doing things better by increasing the numbers of young men and women who are prepared to work at higher levels of creativity and technical competence.

At every level, education pays off. In 1985, a young person with a high school diploma working full-time, year-round would have made over $2,100 a year more than a fully-employed youth who had not graduated from high school. The income differential increases dramatically with level of educational attainment. In a new study, "What's It Worth?" the Census Bureau reports that a college graduate made $865 more a month in 1984 than a high school graduate. And, at an average monthly income of $3,871, those holding professional degrees more than doubled the average college graduates' monthly income of $1,910.[27]

The advantages of a college education in economic terms are apparent. Yet, we do not advocate college education for all. Rather, we urge that all young people have access to the kind of educational experiences that are best suited to their needs, interests, and future plans and those of a rapidly changing market. For increasing numbers, this will mean college. We welcome this increase and support the expansion of opportunities that will enable more young people whose interest in learning is keen, but who have been barred from college by poor preparation or limited finances, to take advantage of its opportunities. Most young people, however, will enter the work force with a high school education, in some cases, supplementing it over time with on-the-job training and continuing education. If we expect greater numbers of our young people to begin "working smarter" tomorrow, we must be willing to make substantial investments *today* to create an improved and flexible system of school and work experiences that will help all of our young people meet their potential. If our society is to have a better future, we must begin by giving our young people better chances.

Chapter 5

An Added Chance

Half of our high school students finish schooling knowing that we as taxpayers and private contributors will give them an added chance to further their education and sharpen their skills. The American people have created, and subsidize in a variety of ways, some 3,500 public and private postsecondary education institutions—all designed to provide continuing opportunity for personal and career development. This nation has wisely invested in higher education for its college students, and we as citizens are justly proud of a network of diverse colleges and universities which remains the envy of the world.

But for the other half, especially the students who did not fare as well in school, we do little, and we seem untroubled by our omission. When these young people leave high school, with or without a diploma, they are on their own. They rightly deserve the label of the "forgotten half" when they walk out of a high school for the last time.*

Our pride in the opportunities we offer some of our students must be tempered by an understanding of unmet needs and legitimate claims among those who don't go on to postsecondary education. Simply put, there are few second or added chances for those in the "forgotten half" who have dropped out of school, or who are unable to find adequate employment, for whatever reason. Many will need additional education and training to get started in a career, but they may not come to that painful realization until well after leaving school. Only in a relatively few instances is public support available to give them that second opportunity. This is not to say that high rates of youth unemployment, or underemployment, can be blamed on the public's failure to provide appropriate training and placement programs. As we said earlier, the creation of jobs is an economic phenomenon, not an education and training issue per se. Still, education and training can do much to help young people to find their way into whatever jobs are available. But for most young people who are out of school and out of work, education and training help is simply not there. Ideally, their needs should be met in the first-chance system. We hope, indeed expect, that school reform efforts will bring that ideal to reality. But that will take some years. Therefore, we see an added-chance for enhancing learning and developing job skills as a present necessity.

The Commission believes that we as a nation must be as willing to create opportunities for non-college-bound youth as we are for those who go on to higher education. There are obviously practical reasons for the nation to do more in providing help for the non-college-bound youth. If unemployed or underemployed, these youth are an economic drag on our society. Rather than earning money and paying taxes, they cost society through crime, drug addiction, welfare, and dependency. Spending more for postsecondary education and for employment training programs can be a wise investment, even in the short-term.

But we do not want to rest our case entirely on an economist's calculated guess on society's savings if crime and welfare dependency can be reduced by a certain percentage. We believe the issue is also one of basic *fairness.* If we as citizens and taxpayers gladly pay more than $40,000 over four years to send a student to a public university, we should also be willing to pay a fraction of that amount for a few months of training for the young person who needs this type of help in getting started on a life of self-sufficiency.

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* The special needs of disabled youth as well as those living away from home—in the foster care or juvenile justice systems or on the streets as runaways—will be addressed in working papers now in preparation. (See inside back cover.)

During the two turbulent decades preceding passage of the Job Training Partnership Act in 1982, the federal government enacted, uprooted, repealed, and then re-enacted more than a dozen employment and training measures designed, at least in part, to deal with the scourge of youth unemployment. This almost continuous upheaval in federal job training legislation and its widely fluctuating funding is hardly the best approach for serving young people in need.

Nevertheless, our knowledge and experience in preparing our young for the world of work and for responsible citizenship has continued to grow, both through trial and error and through systematic research and evaluation. A positive consensus is growing among those who work in employment and training and among those scholars who study it. They believe that we know how to design training programs which can achieve reasonable and reliable rates of success in promoting basic literacy, dependable work habits, technical skills, and job placement. And they believe that a further investment in such programs is a wise one.

We would add only the cautions that we have mentioned before: There is no simple answer for all youth. Their problems and needs are too diverse. Also, **education and training are solutions that work best when inadequate preparation and poor work habits are the essential problem. But unemployment and underemployment in this country have additional and often deeper causes.** They are embedded in the nature of the international economic order and a complexity of macro-economic and structural issues, only some of which involve the knowledge and skill levels of our workforce. We repeat: **by all means, let us educate and prepare our present and future workers, but let no one believe that education and training alone are sufficient to cure all the problems of a troubled economy.**

In this chapter, we present some of what has been learned about successful job training and cite a number of models which should be applied more widely.

* * *

THE GROWTH OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT EFFECTIVE ADDED-CHANCE INTERVENTIONS

Research and evaluation have identified several key training elements or approaches as most likely to produce effective results for high-risk youth. Components such as the following should be included as essential parts of any preventive strategy:

- *Taking a comprehensive, long-term approach* to deal with underlying youth education and training needs, rather than single-solution, quick- fix approaches;
- *Emphasizing dropout and teen pregnancy prevention* through the coordinated delivery of health services, social skills and pre-employment training and placement *within the school context and with the help of community-based organizations;*
- *Beginning efforts no later than the ninth grade, preferably earlier;*
- *Assessing the needs* of each individual and developing an individualized plan for *academic remediation* when required;
- *Using the incentives of guaranteed job placements and training stipends* to make it more likely that youngsters facing the greatest economic hardships will be able and willing to participate; and
- *Using competency-based measures* to determine students' training needs, and to certify their attainment of necessary job-related skills.

While all these elements are important, the one that is absolutely indispensable is that the intervention be both *comprehensive and of long-term duration.* For most high-risk youngsters, no one single training activity or service—no one magic formula—will do the job by itself. These young people usually have to deal with multiple problems or deficiencies in their families and personal lives. Consequently, quick-fix, placement-oriented activities that fail to treat underlying needs in a more thorough-going way are unlikely to have positive results in the long run. The most effective programs provide a broad range of services—educational, health, income support, rehabilitation, etc.; they also tailor assistance to the individual needs of participants. A sustained, flexible sequence of effective education and training approaches is required, not one rigid, quick-fix prescription for all troubled youth, regardless of their individual needs.

The Commission reviewed much

information on a number of training initiatives that use these effective added-chance programming elements and yield encouraging results. (A more detailed analysis is provided in Appendix B, **On Effective Education and Remediation Programs for Youth**.) The notes to this and other sections of our Interim Report also identify several experienced, non-profit, intermediary organizations that can provide technical assistance for an added-chance program that fits a particular community's needs.[1]

Our message is one of hope rather than of specific prescriptions. There are many programs that benefit high-risk youth. Programs *can* work. Money *can* buy results. Every state, every community can find an approach tailored to its own local needs and circumstances. We urge a *direction*, not one specific program. A brief description of some of the more notable efforts follows.

* * *

THE JOB CORPS

The Job Corps is a 23-year-old partnership between the federal government, private contractors, and a variety of agencies at all levels of government. The Corps' legislative mandate is "to assist young individuals who need and can benefit from an unusually intensive program, operated in a residential setting, to become more responsible, employable, and productive citizens." Seventy-five of the Corps' residential centers are operated by private contractors to the Department of Labor. Another 30 Civilian Conservation Centers (CCCs) are administered on federal land by the National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Forest Service.

The Job Corps includes basic and remedial instruction, vocational and technical training, work-maturity skills, health and nutritional services, personal and group counseling, job placement, and other support services. It has been rigorously evaluated and, more important, continually fine-tuned, as any experiment with complex human factors must be. We now know that this multi-faceted program works.

Admittedly, the Job Corps doesn't work for every one. Attrition remains a substantial problem; one-third of enrollees leave in the first three months, while the average residence is about seven months.

Nevertheless, Job Corps graduates have compiled impressive records, despite the fact that participants come from welfare families (about half), are school dropouts (about 80 percent), and have, on the average, sixth-grade reading levels. They also overcome such difficulties as limited prior full-time employment experience and records of arrests and substance abuse. According to the Committee on Youth Employment Programs of the National Research Council (which, in turn, confirmed the findings of an earlier evaluation by Mathematica, Inc.):

> *Jobs Corps enrollees, despite their unpromising backgrounds, were employed for longer periods than nonparticipants; their earnings after leaving the Corps were $567 higher per year; their welfare and unemployment compensation benefits were two weeks and one week lower, respectively; the chances of enrollees receiving a high school diploma or GED was about five times greater than non-participants; their health problems were less serious, as were their post-Corps arrest records. Overall, the benefits of Job Corps participation in terms of increased employment and earnings and decreased crime and transfer payments exceeded the costs by a sizable margin ($2,300) per enrollee.*[2] *[$4,200 in 1986 dollars]*

Other evaluations of the Job Corps have concluded that it raises earnings 15 percent, enables its graduates to be employed longer, assists 75 percent of all enrollees to move on to a job or to full-time study, and provides society with a net social return of $1.46 for every tax dollar invested in the program. For fiscal year 1986, the Job Corps had a graduation rate of 74 percent and graduates earned an average of $4.17 hourly in their initial placement.[3] While these numbers may not strike the reader as remarkable, we must again stress the accummulated deficits that most enrollees carried going into their Job Corps enlistment.

Residential training programs like these are not cheap. In 1985, it cost about $15,800 to pay for a year's training for one student, although the average length of residence was about seven months. About half that cost is for residential support, less than 20 percent for education and training, and another 25 percent for administration. Part of these outlays, however, are recovered immediately through public service benefits (e.g., conservation, recreation)—$3,687 per enrollee in the Conservation Centers, according to the General Accounting Office. Overall, the public's investment in the average enrollee is retrieved in just three years, due mostly to their enhanced employability and decreased criminal behavior. Over a lifetime of productive, taxpaying, dependency-free contributions to society, the return on investment of Job

Corps graduates is nothing short of remarkable.

It is important to note that the Job Corps' current $656 million appropriation supports only 40,500 service years (or slots), the same level as in 1981. The program serves about one percent of the young people actively seeking work and only a small fraction of the high-risk youth population that the Job Corps is designed to serve. Regrettably, even reasonably well-publicized and well-documented success does not guarantee that Americans, as a people, are willing to expand this formula for success to include other youth in distress. [redacted]

STATE AND LOCAL YOUTH CORPS

Currently, 14 states and 12 cities and counties operate year-round conservation corps that incorporate various elements of the Job Corps experience for at-risk (and, in some cases, more advantaged) youth. Their combined budgets of about $98 million serve approximately 20,000 enrollees. Another dozen state, local, and regional summer programs are also in operation. The combined annual budget for all these programs (exclusive of the Job Corps' $656 million), is about $124 million.[4]

A recent evaluation by Public/Private Ventures of the California Conservation Corps, the nation's oldest and largest youth corps ($48 million annual budget serving 2,170 Corps member positions), is encouraging. Seventy per cent of Corps members are considered "educationally/economically disadvantaged youth." Doing high-quality work in more than 2,000 projects per year—fire prevention and suppression, emergency response, disaster relief, energy conservation, park development, historic preservation, salmon restoration, wildlife habitat improvement, reforestation—Corps members generate an economic return that approximates the state's costs of operating the Corps.

Attrition in the Corps (as in the national Job Corps) is high; the average length of stay is 5.1 months, while only one in five enrollees completes a full 12-month program. Nevertheless, the evaluators found that high-risk youth in the Corps experienced "significant post-program earnings benefits, effects that show no evidence of decaying by the end of the first post-program year." Gains in hours worked in the post-program period were also recorded for former California Corps members, as were gains in critical attitudes and behaviors. Overall, conclude the evaluators: "CCC is a financially sound social investment, even without considering post-program earnings and the potential benefits that were not measured in this study (reduction in crime and welfare costs), and without placing any value on the positive changes in attitudes and noneconomic behaviors that were achieved."[5]

NON-RESIDENTIAL PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRAINING

A number of national organizations specialize in offering pre-employment training and basic skills remediation. Since the abolition of US Department of Labor stipends in 1982 for those undergoing such training, opportunities for out-of-school, out-of-work youth have also significantly narrowed. Organizational talent and energy seem to have shifted to helping with school-based dropout prevention programs like STEP and JAG, discussed in the previous section.

The 70001 Training and Employment Institute is one of the more effective youth pre-employment training programs. Over the past 18 years, 70001 has worked with over 50,000 high school dropouts, preparing them for employment. Currently, 70001 operates 60 programs in 23 states.[6] Its trainees, called "Associates," include a third with at least one dependent child; another third on public assistance; one in seven has a police record. Combining remedial instruction, job-readiness or pre-employment training, and a variety of motivational activities, the 70001 Institute has gradually been improving its success rate: Three-fourths of last year's 4,000 Associates found initial employment averaging $3.60 per hour while 674 Associates also earned their GEDs. The Institute's training costs $1,412 per Associate, mostly derived from the US Department of Labor through local Private Industry Councils (PICs) under the Job Training Partnership Act.

Space does not permit description of the work of other reputable non-profit groups which provide pre-employment and/or job training. While definitive evaluation data is lacking in most instances, each organization has its enthusiastic backers in the education and employment training world and each enjoys strong local support. Many possess a wealth of experience and expertise which can help other communities to design and mount their own youth training efforts.[7]

STRENGTHENING THE JOB TRAINING PARTNERSHIP ACT

A critical strategy for improving second-chance employment and training opportunities is to enhance the role played by the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). This approach is especially important given current fiscal and political difficulties in mounting new programs to meet youth training needs. **Making the most of what we already have becomes the first priority. Therefore, strengthening the JTPA presents an important opportunity.**

Currently, less than five percent of eligible youth are served under JTPA's provisions. Indeed, adjusted for inflation, JTPA's budget for fiscal year 1987 is only one-third of CETA's (its predecessor) 1980 appropriation.

The JTPA mandates that a minimum of 40 percent of each local Service Delivery Area (SDA)'s allocation must be spent on youth under age 22. Dropouts must also be served in proportion to their representation in the total group eligible for service. The Act also allocates eight percent—about $150 million annually—of JTPA Title IIA funds to the states to coordinate the delivery of training services with regular educational activities. This eight percent set-aside offers a promising vehicle for the type of school-to-work transition and dropout prevention efforts that we recommend as the cornerstones of our first-chance preventive strategy.

Despite JTPA's call for special attention to the needs of dropouts, many communities ignore the Congressional mandate. As the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation and numerous other independent evaluators have concluded:

> *despite a growing awareness of the correlation between educational disadvantage and chronic joblessness, it appears that the most-at-risk groups of youth are not being adequately served by the JTPA system.*[8]

The youth targeting problem under JTPA is compounded by inadequate funds and the tendency to "cream"—to direct assistance to those easiest to reach, teach, and place quickly in jobs. The average length of JTPA training is only 14 weeks (with many enrollees receiving only one or two weeks of job search instruction), hardly enough to overcome years of accumulated neglect. Those youth with large educational deficits, those most likely to drop out of school, and those facing the most serious barriers to employability are unlikely to be served by JTPA. The fact that stipends are no longer paid to enrollees undergoing training also means that high-risk youth who need income support are unlikely to explore JTPA offerings. As Sar Levitan, Director of the Center for Social Policy Studies at George Washington University remarks: "The poor can't eat training." The combination of placement-oriented performance standards and restricted funding makes it unlikely that those in greatest need will be served in a short turn-around time. (This tendency is powerfully demonstrated by the fact that few Service Delivery Areas have exercised their option to adopt alternative youth performance standards that could stress academic attainments and other dropout prevention measures, rather than the preferred standards, which are oriented toward faster job placement. In other words, under existing legislation, SDAs can spend more per capita on high-risk youth if they desire to do so. But the name of the game is fast, low-cost placements to make the local project look successful, not helping those who are hardest to help.)

A number of improvements would make JTPA more responsive to the needs of high-risk youth and would take more effective advantage of the youth training opportunities that the program promises, but does not currently fulfill. In addition to re-examining the use of placement performance standards and reinstituting training stipends for those lacking other means of support, we suggest the following improvements, which have emerged from the positive experience of several SDAs:

1. *Broadening the Use of Academic Remediation as a Major Component of All Youth Programming.* Mention has been made of how remediation is a small part—about five percent of the total budget—of the summer youth employment program. Academic remediation is even more necessary with regard to the much larger proportion of JTPA funds spent during the school year. **The Department of Labor should vigorously direct the increased use of basic skills remediation in all of its funded training activities.**
2. *Improving the Targeting of JTPA's 40 percent Youth Set-Aside and 8 percent Discretionary Fund to Effective Added-Chance Approaches.* This objective would be furthered by:
   - awarding incentive payments (partly from the eight percent state discretionary funds) to SDAs to adopt innovative, youth-focused, added-chance opportunities, stressing service to higher proportions of high-risk, dropout-prone youngsters;

- helping communities with technical assistance, training JTPA professionals, disseminating information more widely about exemplary practices; and, especially
- encouraging wider use of the option already available to SDAs to adjust their youth performance standards to promote longer-term assistance, and targeting it more effectively at the highest-risk youngsters.

3. *Emphasizing Dropout Prevention As A Preventive Measure* by encouraging and supporting the replication of successful models, including those that stress employment and training opportunities for in-school, dropout-prone students, like Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG), Summer Training and Education Program (STEP), and the like.

While these steps would not entirely alter the underlying problems resulting from an inadequacy of funding and the "natural tendency" of administrators toward "creaming" the most job-ready trainees, they can help to reorient existing youth assistance efforts to make a more positive contribution to high-risk youth than is now the case.[9]

Finally, while increased investment in youth employment training and dropout prevention makes eminent good sense, we caution once again that **waiting until high-risk youth reach their teens is a needlessly costly policy. The act of dropping out of school is a symptom, in some ways the culmination, of long and complex processes in the lives of children and youth. The most cost-effective prevention—as our nation's governors, state human service administrators, and leading business leaders have forcefully recognized—means starting with prenatal health care, sound nutrition, quality childcare and early learning followed by strong elementary schooling. Nothing less than this early intervention and comprehensive approach will yield the results Americans seek.**[10]

A ROLE FOR THE ARMED FORCES

Today, only nine percent of all new recruits to the armed forces lack a high school diploma or its equivalent. But the imminent demographic decline in the number of young people available for military service is likely to raise that percentage.

Merely to maintain their present strength and educational levels, the armed forces would have to attract one-third of all high school graduates. Competition for these graduates from private employers and colleges suggests that the armed forces will be able to meet their quotas only by dropping their present standards and accepting youth who need remediation. Recognizing this impending problem, some observers have called for the reinstitution of compulsory military service to guarantee more, better qualified enlisted personnel, as well as to share the duties of military service among all the economic and educational strata of our society.

Regardless of the merits of reinstituting the draft, we believe that the military provides a useful institutional framework for giving a significant proportion of our young people a second chance to earn high school equivalency. [redacted] Most military posts offer access to a variety of fine educational offerings, on and off-duty. We also believe that even greater official determination is needed to see that all discharged service personnel are effectively equipped with marketable skills to participate in the civilian labor market.

The experience of other countries indicates that the military can be very effective in raising basic skill levels. The Department of Defense's much-maligned Project 100,000 of the Sixties (in which the military provided intensive basic skills training for recruits scoring from the 10th to 30th percentiles on the Armed Forces Qualification Test) provides a good example of what is possible. Recent research reveals that these supposedly educationally substandard personnel, when given opportunities to raise their skills, performed their military tasks virtually as well as recruits who scored above the 30th percentile. As a group they went on to attain significant levels of achievement in the armed forces. Twelve years after the project ended, 8,200 participants had won career status in the army and were working in higher-level positions than the non-participant control group. In civilian life, project participants earned more per hour, had less unemployment, and achieved more education than comparable ability groups that had not participated in Project 100,000. Moreover, 68 percent of them were so well motivated and remediated that they could take advantage of the postsecondary education benefits of the G.I. Bill.[11]

We conclude with reasonable assurance that the armed forces *can* successfully reclaim and upgrade individuals, who are too often regarded as unfit for military service and for contributions in later life. Here, too, the problem is not lack of knowledge but an uncertainty of will and lack of public agreement to bear the near-term costs of this sound investment in remediation.

In summary, the evidence shows that the United States has a good start on added-chance programs, in the sense that sufficient experimentation and analysis is available to warrant enlarged efforts in this realm. *We recommend: 1) expanding the Job Corps and state and local conservation corps that combine academic skills and useful public work, and 2) expanding efforts under the Job Partnership Training Act to target intensively the most high-risk youth.*

One worrisome feature of all these relatively successful endeavors is that they are usually conducted outside the schools, with too little interest and participation of the schools. The same might be said for the relative isolation of most added-chance programs from the long-established welfare, health, and employment services of the states and communities. Coordination—much talked about but little practiced—requires strong federal and state leadershp if we are ever to see the kind of comprehensive and effective services, which alone can lead ultimately to the withering away of a separate training system for our nation's poor and high-risk youth. *[illegible] educational and other h[illegible] service leaders—school boards, [illegible] of education, [illegible] teachers and [illegible] welfare and [illegible] and their staffs, [illegible] in these [illegible] And we urge the [illegible] of the states to [illegible] together the full [illegible] social welfare, [illegible] transportation, [illegible] and other human services so that education and employment training programs may be strengthened by the [illegible] services.*

In the short term, this coordination will provide more comprehensive supports for those who need them. In the long term, increased involvement of school personnel will enable educators to find ways to incorporate the best elements of these programs into the schools, moving us closer to our overall goal: a flexible and responsive first-chance system which retains virtually all of its students until they graduate and which encourages many to pursue higher learning.

> *There aren't two worlds—education and work—one for youth, the other for maturity. There is one world—life.*
>
> Willard Wirtz, *The Boundless Resource*[1]

Chapter 6

Equal Access to Lifelong Learning

The demands of a highly technological, information-based society are helping to break down the barrier between the worlds of education and work. For many workers and citizens, continued periodic training and renewed formal learning are essential if they want to keep apace of a fast-changing economy. It is estimated that employers invest $210 billion a year in the education and training of their employees. Of this, $180 billion is for on-the-job training and $30 billion is paid to other institutions to provide teaching and training.[2] This huge investment substantially surpasses the $112 billion budgets of postsecondary education institutions in the United States.[3]

Moreover, many older citizens, healthy and vigorous, have chosen to enrich their lives by renewing their education. Whether for business or pleasure, or some combination of both, this adult learning can take many forms and take place in a variety of institutions. It also has many names. Some label it "recurrent education." Others call it "continuing education." We prefer the name "lifelong learning."

Whatever the label, lifelong learning is becoming a reality in the United States. Literally millions of adults are participating in special learning programs, and billions of dollars are spent on such training. This is a development that benefits our citizens and enriches our society. But the Commission believes one concern must be raised: *the inequality of our existing education system is fast being reproduced in the growing adult learning system.* Most lifelong learning efforts are geared to adults who have met with success in traditional education. Those students who make up the "forgotten half" are largely ignored by most adult learning institutions.

Several scholars—Robert Sheets of Northern Illinois University and Andrew Hahn, Robert Lerman and Erik Butler of Brandeis University—have argued that adult learning programs can reduce the inequality of education and job status that is linked to race and class in our society.[4] But currently, both public and private resources for adult education are channelled overwhelmingly to persons who have or are seeking a college degree. Without denigrating such programs, [redacted]

We do not recommend a particular program or even a model effort. Instead, we believe what is needed is a new focus and a new direction for adult learning. In this chapter, we discuss the elements of successful lifelong learning and describe several financing options that warrant extensive study and experimentation.

ELEMENTS ALREADY IN PLACE

The defining characteristic of a desirable lifelong learning system should be that it enables a learner to move easily from one part of the system to another, carrying the credit earned in one part of the system to another. Ideally, a person who seeks an educational credential and who has enjoyed extensive employer-based training, when that training is relevant, should be able to present documents, pass an examination, or otherwise qualify for credit in another part of the system. Creating such a transfer system is one of the purposes of the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL); it is also one of the functions of external degree programs, such as New York's Empire State College. The College Board, too, conducts periodic examinations for establishing credit in a number of academic fields.

In employer-based training and external degree programs, the elements of a fairly coherent system already exist, but as Carnevale and Goldstein[5] have noted, employer-sponsored education and training are directed overwhelmingly to managerial and professional personnel. Employers not only train their employees directly but sometimes pay for courses in both public and private educational institutions through tuition assistance programs. Much of this education, naturally, is closely tied to job performance. However, consistent with the notion that learning is a fundamental human activity, many employers pay for courses that are only distantly related to employment, if at all. Enlightened corporations offer college courses on-site or pay for employee enrollment in such subjects as literature and philosophy. Executive and middle-management seminars on broad public issues are increasingly seen as a good employment practice. Such opportunities are offered as a fringe benefit and as a powerful means of promoting employees' happiness and personal development; they are also an increasingly powerful employee recruitment device.

Workplaces are also the settings for uncounted hours of informal instruction, offered on-the-job by one employee to another during the workday. Because such interaction is neither planned nor formally sponsored, it is impossible to estimate the resources devoted to this type of learning. They are surely much greater than the investment in formal education and training and the $180 billion a year that Carnevale estimates are invested in on-the-job training. Moreover, for blue-collar workers, this informal instruction is by far the most prevalent type of training. Invaluable as this spontaneous worker-to-worker instruction is, however, it does not provide credit which the learner can carry with him from job to job and present as objective evidence of his additional training. Formal training for manual workers tends to be both narrow and brief.

Four-year colleges and universities are beginning to play a greater role in recurrent education. They are increasingly developing programs to serve adults, especially women, who are entering or re-entering higher education later in life, often for reasons that are career-related, sometimes to explore their own interests and potential.

Community colleges are highly successful providers of recurrent education and have quietly transformed American higher education over the past four decades. Most offer four kinds of courses: standard liberal arts courses for those hoping to transfer to a four-year college; career-related instruction for those seeking one- or two-year certification for employment; personal enrichment courses offered without the expectation that they will lead to employment or further education; and remedial courses for those who lack the credentials or basic skills required to participate successfully in college-level courses. More than most educational institutions, community colleges offer the programs that learners perceive as important to their personal goals.

The last three types of courses—career-training, personal enrichment, and remediation—are also offered by a wide range of adult or continuing education institutions. Many public school systems offer such courses and have done so at least as far back as the turn of the century, when recent immigrants were the student group of most concern. Federal funding for vocational education includes a provision for vocationally-related adult education, especially for displaced workers. In addition, community centers and numerous voluntary organizations offer a wide range of courses, seminars, and workshops, quite often of serious form and substance.

GED programs, federal adult education, and the added-chance programs discussed in Chapter 5 now comprise important elements in the current patchwork of recurrent education. As this report has already recommended, the added chances provided by these remedial programs should be incorporated eventually into a more flexible first-chance educational system. A network of community-based learning opportunities, with schools at its core, would provide a wide array of alternative paths for students to acquire the basic skills and core knowledge of a common curriculum. Moving away from age-based, lock-step schooling would enable young people who drop out to return more easily, as would our earlier recommendation to extend free public education to any youth continuing to work toward a diploma for as long as is necessary. With a far better first-chance system in place, more young people would enter the labor market better equipped to work and to take advantage of the additional opportunities offered by a system of lifelong learning. Until then, however, investments in added-chance programs must be increased to meet the immediate needs of those who are unprepared for today's highly competitive labor market.

We have argued that a comprehensive and widely available system of recurrent education is necessary for three reasons: to train and re-train workers, to develop human potential, and to reduce some of the inequities associated with race and class. The elements of such a system are already in place: in employer-financed education and training, in four-year colleges, in public schools and community-based adult education, in federally-financed employment and training programs, and especially in community colleges. But the benefits of planned on-the-job training and general personal development this system offers largely bypass blue collar, underemployed, and unemployed workers. As it now operates, a plethora of recurrent education offerings does little to reduce inequalities of opportunity caused by differences in education, race, and class. Indeed, by effectively excluding large segments of the population, the present non-system of recurrent education contributes to a continuing imbalance.

Data reviewed by the Commission lead us to conclude that **there is a persuasive argument to expand education and training opportunities for *all* non-college-bound youth. An even more compelling case can be made for the potential value of recurrent education to low-income youth, the subset of the non-college population that experiences the most prolonged and severe unemployment and underemployment.**

OPTIONS FOR FINANCING RECURRENT EDUCATION

Financial support for these elements of a potential system of recurrent education now comes primarily from various levels of government, from employers, and from individuals, through tuition and fees. Overall, according to Sheets and the Brandeis researchers:

> *The combined effect of current public and private expenditure on postsecondary education and training is to concentrate investment in college-bound youth with only limited funds going to non-college-bound youth, especially those youth who first break into the labor market through unskilled jobs. Public expenditures are heavily weighted in favor of college education subsidies, with funds flowing to higher educational institutions and student grants and loans. Businesses also invest most of their education and training dollars in managerial and professional employees. . . . Government tax policies and expenditures reinforce these institutional patterns. The result is that collegebound youth are able to "pyramid" both public and private subsidies for education and training over their working lives. In contrast, non-college youth, especially lower-income youth, receive little subsidy after they leave high school unless they completely drop out of the labor force and become eligible for the limited government funds targeted at the unemployed and disadvantaged in so-called "second-chance" programs. (pp. 22-23)*[6]

To overcome this institutional bias in favor of the advantaged, Sheets and his Brandeis colleagues propose careful consideration of the following array of options for financing recurrent education.

INDIVIDUAL TRAINING ACCOUNTS

Patterned after Individual Retirement Accounts, Individual Training Accounts would accumulate untaxed savings set aside by workers and matched by their employers. If the worker left voluntarily or retired, both parties could withdraw their contributions, with interest, and pay taxes on them. If the worker were displaced, she or he could use the account as a tax-free training voucher. Although this approach seems promising as a protection for workers against economic and technological change, and has been used with success in some European countries, it has little to offer for the group most in need, the disadvantaged who have difficulty finding a good job in the first place.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING AS AN EMPLOYEE BENEFIT

The declining youth population foreshadows a period of increasing demand for labor. Employers are likely to use enhanced benefits to attract workers and, with the growing number of two-earner families, those benefits are likely to become more flexible. Education and training benefits, for example, might be chosen over health insurance by an employee with an already insured spouse.

An example of this approach with young workers is Burger King's Crew Educational Assistance Program. In this program, workers may qualify for company education or training assistance of up to $2,000 by steady work and maintaining a C average in school. Burger King credits the plan with eliminating more than two-thirds of worker turnover.

This proposal, too, benefits only those who already have a job. However, the fact that it works for a fast food chain promises that other providers of entry-level jobs might make it accessible to much larger numbers of young workers.

COMMUNITY (OR NATIONAL) SERVICE

Many adults remember the Civilian Conservation Corps of the '30s as a useful model of national service, just as they view the educational assistance provided by the GI Bill as the exemplar of delayed compensation for public service. These two models have been combined in recent proposals. It is suggested that participants in community (or national) youth service be able to earn educational vouchers redeemable for college or vocational training. This approach would aid all youth in the pursuit of further education, while simultaneously meeting vital social needs and providing a sound maturational experience. (See the discussion of community service in Chapter 4 above.)

INDIVIDUAL ENTITLEMENTS

Another approach would make government support for postsecondary education and training directly available to individuals. Economist Lester Thurow, for example, has proposed that each citizen be granted a $12,000 lifetime line of credit for education and training purposes.[7] This plan would allow individuals to choose the kind of education they wished to invest in, if and when they wished to use their credit. Flexibility, availability to all, and the attractions of a consumer-dominated free market approach are among the proposal's strengths. Yet, if financed by eliminating current government support to institutions through a large variety of student-aid programs, the voucher-like line of credit or entitlement could be politically incendiary. Such an approach would also eliminate government's leverage in setting education and training priorities, as, for example, when government makes support available for research and training in engineering and the sciences.

ENROLLMENT SUBSIDIES

Another way to tie government support for education and training to individual choice rather than to institutions would allow a range of public and private education and training providers to claim a subsidy based on enrollment or attendance. Eligibility criteria and monitoring procedures would be essential under such a plan to discourage fraud. (On the other hand, any limitation on individual choice and any requirement to certify providers would, we fear, lead to new and cumbersome bureaucracy.) This approach could also be combined with others; for example, the subsidy could be drawn from an individual's lifetime entitlement. Employer contributions could be tied to their involvement in planning and overseeing the subsidized courses.

EXPANDED COLLEGE WORK-STUDY PROGRAMS

Federal and college work-study programs provide a vehicle for linking financial aid to work and service programs for students. Federal funds cover 80 percent of the wages of the student's employment, either on or off-campus. These programs could be significantly expanded, providing more opportunities for academic and career-related work experience while increasing the financial resources for students to pursue postsecondary education.

A SYSTEM OF LIFELONG LEARNING FOR *ALL* CITIZENS

Two points seem clear from our analysis:

- **Continuing education and training opportunities have a critical contribution to make in raising the educational levels of the entire nation and, as we have noted in Chapter 5, in improving the employment opportunities of low-income youth.**
- **The current unsystematic provision and financing of postsecondary education and training strongly favor college-bound youth and college graduates. While their needs are by no means adequately addressed, they do receive a disproportionate share of society's support for recurrent education. Without improved delivery systems and financing mechanisms, low-income youth in particular, and non-college-bound youth, in general, will continue to suffer by comparison with our best-educated young.**

Additional efforts are needed to educate and train the neediest at a level at least equivalent to the support now provided to the most advantaged by governments and private employers. By "neediest" we mean especially the chronically unemployed who are likely to be those with the fewest years of formal education. Institutional and financial changes are also needed to smooth movement from one type of recurrent education to another.

Any serious effort to improve the existing hodge-podge of recurrent education, however, will require more than additional resources and more systematic financing than is now in place. Alternative strategies must also be designed to involve and motivate the participation of wider segments to take advantage of existing and newly-created opportunities.

Although not specific to low-income youth, some available data suggest that worker participation in employer-sponsored training increases when all academic credit and completion restrictions are removed. In addition, when given the choice, more workers enroll in personal enrichment rather than career advancement courses.

It is often assumed that the real business of continued schooling for low-income workers must be to acquire the credentials and skills necessary to catch up with those already ahead in the economic race. But because everyone else is running, too, catching up is easier said than done. Highly academic courses are often not the best means to do this, especially for those whose prior school experiences have been disappointing. A system of recurrent education may have more relevance to the unemployed and underemployed, if it places less emphasis, rather than more, on its strictly economic and job-related benefits. The benefits derived from well-designed opportunities to explore and affirm personal interests are many, perhaps the most important being a renewed confidence in and appreciation of one's own ability to learn. Far from being "fluff," personal enrichment and nonacademic courses, when designed from the perspective of the disadvantaged, may offer a much-needed means to capture their interest and participation and thus to truly enhance their ability to learn what is important to them.

Research suggests a strong connection between self-esteem and success in personal relationships, in school and, for men, especially at work.[8] Lifelong learning programs should apply this knowledge to enhance rather than undermine participants' sense of worth and competence.

Another important lesson learned in serving disadvantaged adults under federal education programs is that, while they want to learn, much of what is available through traditional educational institutions is often not what they feel they need and can benefit from. In order to involve more non-college-bound and low-income youth, an expanded system of recurrent education should develop increased opportunities for learner control of content and format. In every instance, it should offer young people the chance to exercise greater control over their education and training, as well as many more opportunities to experience success and the gratifying sense of self-empowerment.

In short, **the American people deserve better than the hodge-podge, unsystematic and inequitable recurrent education financing mechanisms now in place.** ***Therefore, the Commission urges that 1) policymakers and community leaders recognize that existing student financial aid programs and institutional structures fail to serve non-college youth equitably and, thereby, shortchange half our population; and that 2) as a first step, philanthropic foundations should fund a thorough and thoughtful inquiry into the question of how the United States can achieve a comprehensive, effective, and equitable system of lifelong learning for all our citizens.***

In addition to thinking through improved means of financing and providing more opportunities for all youth to participate in current programs, concerted attention should be given to exploring radically different learner-oriented alternatives. Such an inquiry should start with a visionary look into the future of both work and leisure; it should begin to plan not only for what is probable, but for what is desirable. Further research is needed to identify and describe new relationships emerging from the balance between work and learning in the workplace. Learning offered only by formal educational institutions is not enough. Planned demonstrations informed by new knowledge must be funded if we are to devise initiatives that are innovative and coordinated, and that cross institutional boundaries in support of lifelong learning.

An essential element in any strategy for improvement must be action research among low-income adults to learn, from their perspective, what they think they need and what learning strategies will work best for them. Efforts such as that recently proposed by Public/Private Ventures to conduct in-depth conversations with groups of hard-to-reach young people about what they want and need from added-chance and recurrent education programs should be supported.

Chapter 7

Making It Happen: Increased Investments In Success

If America's economic competition with the Pacific Rim has taught us one lesson, it is that we need an educated and energetic work force to compete. Understanding that fact, the many school reform studies of this decade have recommended more rigorous academic demands for our nation's college-bound youth.

This Commission has drawn an additional lesson from the same view of economic reality. Many of the half of our young people who are not going to college could profit from a substantially different sort of schooling if they are to have a chance to contribute to that more productive work force. Many of these young people need extra as well as different learning opportunities while in school. *All* our young could benefit from a chance to learn about the real world of work before they leave school. And most could use extra help—whether skills training, placement assistance, or further education—after they leave high school.

Some of the changes the Commission recommends in this Interim Report will cost more money. Many of them carry little or no added cost. But *our most important message calls for a changed attitude toward those whom we have called the "forgotten half." There is simply no warrant for viewing these youth in a negative light.* The facts do not support the notion that they are a generation on the skids. The facts do show, however, that without additional adult support, they are swimming against an economic tide. These youth need our respect and, in some cases, our assistance.

America's taxpayers have been generous to our college-bound youth, and rightfully so. However, [redacted]

The celebrated *Nation At Risk* report in 1983 stated the proposition well: **"Excellence costs. But in the long run mediocrity costs more." To fail in providing opportunities for our non-college-bound youth will be just as damaging, and just as costly for our nation's future, as to fail to seek excellence for our college-educated youth.**

When making a dollars-and-cents calculation about education and training, we must consider both the costs incurred and the costs avoided. The former are easier to calculate than the latter. But the many economic analyses of schooling and job training have yielded the same conclusion: the earlier the investment, the greater the return. Programs for developmentally deficient three year-olds cost more than pre-natal or infant health care and nutrition. Elementary school remedial programs cost more than Head Start and other early child development programs. Job Corps costs more than extra high school remediation and pre-employment training. Prisons and Aid to Families with Dependent Children cost more than the Job Corps, and so on.

We believe, therefore, that an additional investment in our youth's future makes good economic sense. And when the extra investment is directed at those young people who benefit the least from current programs, we also think it furthers a sense of basic fairness.

Our recommendations include more support for proven programs that have been shown to help disadvantaged children in the early years. We also call for new efforts to lend a helping hand to young people after they leave school. They offer the bare minimum of help our youth deserve and leave untouched the serious problems of housing, health, transportation that so many must face on their own. In both cases, this Commission views its recommendations as inherently conservative, preserving, and enhancing. They propose measures that can develop our most basic national resource, our youth.

THE COSTS OF NEGLECT

Let us for a moment review what recent research has shown us about the costs of neglect and the benefits of investing in our young. James S. Catterall, a professor of education at the University of California at Los Angeles, estimates[1] that male high school graduates without any college study have lifetime earnings averaging $195,000 greater than high school dropouts; female graduates earn $146,000 more than dropouts. Including all those who pursue college study, male graduates earn $266,000 more than dropouts, while comparable female graduates earn $199,000 more. Catterall further calculates that the 973,000 dropouts from the nation's high school "Class of 1981" will lose $228 *billion* in personal earnings over their lifetimes, while the society will lose $68.4 *billion* in taxes. Taking a specific case, Los Angeles, Catterall concludes that the service costs of treating the area's dropouts amounted to $488 million in 1985 alone—$125 million for city police services, $225 million for county judicial and parole services, $40 million for county welfare services, $90 million for county health services, and $8 million for city employment services. The dropout problem of a single year in Los Angeles alone (20,000 students) represents lost lifetime earnings of $3.2 billion and lost local tax collections of $120 million.

The Committee for Economic Development similarly reminds us that:

> *Each year's class of dropouts costs the nation more than $240 billion in lost earnings and forgone taxes over their lifetimes. Billions more will be spent on crime control, and on welfare, health care, and other social services. Every $1 spent on early prevention and intervention can save $4.74 in the costs of remedial education, welfare, and crime further down the road.*[2]

THE PUBLIC'S READINESS TO INVEST IN CHILDREN AND YOUTH

We note with satisfaction that our view favoring increased investment in our young is widely shared by the American people, if not always by our elected officials. Public opinion surveys reveal that a decisive majority of our fellow citizens believe that we are underinvesting in our young and in our future. The recent Louis Harris survey for Group W—Westinghouse Broadcasting Company,[3] for example, found that 63 percent of the public believes our society as a whole spends too little on the needs of children and youth. Governments are perceived as failing to meet their responsibilities to children; only 34 percent of the public credit local government with doing a good job for children, while even fewer (28 percent) think the federal government is doing well by our young. Significantly, Harris and his colleagues append this observation: "in thirty years of public opinion research, this is one of the worst ratings of government on a major social issue we have ever recorded." Parents and nonparents alike, in majorities ranging from 70-86 percent of the public, declare that they would be willing to pay more taxes for drug prevention programs, public schools, day care, parks and recreation, and the like.

SOME PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE INCREASED FUNDING OF YOUTH PROGRAMS

In this Interim Report, we have avoided recommendations for the establishment of new, top-down legislative mandates and rigidly prescribed "cookie cutter" programs. We recognize that local leadership must have discretion to innovate and constantly refine the operations of its programs and practices. Therefore, our intention is to point out those broad *policies* which seem to us most likely to make the most of the untapped talents and capacities of our youth.

Policies alone, no matter how inspired, are insufficient. New and improved forms of accountability and more effective program models are also required. The public surely has a right to insist on both greater efficiency and effectiveness.

We are enthusiastic about the policy direction emerging from the nation's state superintendents of education about the desirability of enacting specific statewide substantive legal guarantees for students. Such guarantees would be designed to produce virtually universal high school graduation and might include such essential features as: an early childhood development program beginning ideally by age three, but no later than age four; effective health and social services necessary to overcome conditions that jeopardize students' chances of school success and, thus, graduation; the *right* to attend a school which demonstrates sustained student academic progress leading to graduation; access to a certified staff with opportunities for continuous professional development; participation of families as partners in children's learning at home and at school; and administrative and judicial procedures by which students and their parents can be assured these guarantees are, in fact, implemented. Surely, advances like these would help to assure taxpayers that their money is not buying "more of the same," but is leading to more accountable and effective schools than we have at present.

Beyond legal guarantees, added resources are also needed to give flesh and sinew to any efforts to nurture our young, to redeem those who have been allowed to slip into lives of dependency and nonparticipation, and to mobilize our institutions for a new attack on ignorance, joblessness, and despair. We believe that **public funding levels are woefully inadequate** to meet the education and training needs of America's young, and increased human resource expenditures at *all* levels of government are essential.

Americans are coming together on these issues because we want to preserve the American dream. And we know that it cannot be done if we continue to behave as a swarm of isolated individuals oblivious to the pain and the untapped potential of our fellow citizens. **(1)**

Our problems are complex but they can be solved. We cannot afford not to solve them. Our very survival as a nation of compassion, creativity and strength depend on it. **(2)**

We must rekindle in the United States the expectation that our children . . . all of our children . . . will do well. **(3)**

Governors Bill Clinton (1), Michael Castle (2), Rudy Perpich (3) in *Bringing Down the Barriers: Making America Work; Productive People, Productive Policies* (1987)

FOR A FAIR FEDERAL SHARE

In the past year alone, more than 30 states have increased their taxes to maintain or increase existing levels of social services, including a broad range of youth and educational programs. But the federal government has not been shouldering its fair share of these needed investments in the nation's future. In public elementary and secondary education, for example, the federal share of expenditures has fallen from about eight percent in 1966 to an estimated 6.2 percent this year.

The federal government has inescapable responsibilities in this arena of public policy. To quote the Reagan Administration's National Commission on Excellence in Education:

> *The Federal Government, in cooperation with States and localities, should help meet the needs of key groups of students such as the gifted and talented, the socioeconomically disadvantaged, minority and language minority students, and the handicapped. In combination these groups include both national resources and the Nation's youth who are most at risk. . .*
>
> *The Federal Government has the primary responsibility to identify the national interest in education. It should also help fund and support efforts to protect and promote that interest. . .*
>
> *We also call upon citizens to provide the financial support necessary to accomplish these purposes. Excellence costs. But in the long run mediocrity costs far more.*
>
> *A Nation at Risk* (1983)

Therefore, in concert with increased state and local fiscal effort, *we call for increased federal investments in children and youth of at least $5 billion annually over each of the next ten years.*

We are agreed that this increased investment must not add to the already massive federal budget deficit. Increasing the national debt is no less an act of irresponsibility than ignoring the facts that our children and youth need help and that additional money is an essential ingredient in providing that help.

The minimum $5 billion investment increment we call for can be provided in several ways: by increasing general tax rates, by eliminating existing tax preferences, or by making major realignments in domestic and military spending priorities. These are hard choices, but making tough decisions is what we elect our leaders to do.

Another way to raise the much-needed revenues is also worthy of public discussion: a dedicated tax which might be termed an "Investment in America's Youth Surcharge." Not because it is the only way to raise needed revenues, but because it is a non-traditional approach, we devote additional discussion to its possible workings.

The surcharge, simply, would be a one percent addition to individual personal federal income tax liability, specifically earmarked for children and youth. This approach may have advantages over a general tax increase: (1) it would assure the tax-paying public that its hard-earned money will be invested in programs the majority of the public professes to support—those which improve the futures of young people; (2) it would join, rather than divide, our generations by assuring older Americans that a more productive and self-supporting workforce will be created which, in turn, will help to support them in their time of retirement; and (3) most important, it would send a loud and clear message to our young: "You are important. Adult America believes in you. We are doing our part to help you realize your full potential."

We do not recommend that the one percent surcharge be levied on corporate America as it struggles to modernize and compete in an increasingly difficult global economy. The one percent surcharge would be applied to interest, dividends, and all other forms of taxable personal income, so we see no need to tax the owners of corporations twice.

Nor would we tax the poor and those who earn too little to pay individual income tax. The rest of us, however, can afford to shoulder the small additional burden of helping the young attain dignity and self-sufficiency in an America at work.

A one percent surcharge, unlike proposals for sales or value added taxes, maintains the progressivity of existing tax rates. It is also a modest tax increase, particularly in view of the far-reaching tax rate reductions enacted into law in 1981 and in 1986. An individual earning $100,000 of taxable income with a tax liability of, say, $30,000 would be asked to pay an extra $300. The taxpayer who is liable for taxes of $3,000 would pay only an additional $30. Surely, these are relatively slight burdens to shoulder to enhance our investment in children and youth and, therewith, our country's future.

Political and economic experts more versed than we in the workings of the federal tax code will, of course, need to consider the pros and cons of a possible Youth Surcharge. Our main purpose here is to support vigorously the proposition that *this is no time for business as usual*. The crisis of a substantial segment of America's youth is in truth no less urgent than that of older Americans in the 1930s. Then, recognizing the gravity of the situation, our nation embarked on earmarked funding which made Social Security possible. Today, too, we need to face squarely the fact that existing revenues, and particularly the federal share, are woefully inadequate to deal with the needs of America's youth.

Whatever the mechanism employed, $5 billion is the minimum increase in federal children and youth programs which our Commission urges.

Expenditures of these added funds for youth should be made according to several principles:

- They should be targeted for the benefit of high-risk youth.
- They should be used to supplement, not displace or supplant, prior levels of Congressional appropriations.
- They should be made available with firm, bipartisan long-term assurances over a 10-year period.
- They should be used to leverage additional state, local, and private matching effort, rather than carry the entire burden at the federal level.
- Allocations of funds should be kept relatively constant among programs from year to year because:
  (1) states and communities need stable and predictable funding to plan and execute their youth development programs;
  (2) any investment of this magnitude needs periodic review and reevaluation; and,
  (3) there are no quick and painless victories in the struggle to help our youth realize their full potential.

A decade is necessary to demonstrate our constancy of purpose. And the accumulated investment of $50 billion is large enough to achieve significant progress in improving the lives of our young.

THE USES OF ADDED FEDERAL INVESTMENTS

It will not be an easy task for the Congress to allocate additional funds among a host of competing programs and priorities or to decide what matching funds might be required from other levels of government. But that is what a Congress is for. We have every confidence that reasonably wise choices will be made if we are clear on two points: 1) that our overriding objective is to help our young to a more responsible and satisfying level of participation in society; and 2) that the added funds should flow primarily into well-tested programs, most of which are documented in this report.

Since no single intervention can simultaneously remove the accumulated backlog of human neglect, if we are to strengthen a variety of youth-serving institutions and make a long-term investment in prevention, we recommend that the federal investment be spread over a variety of proven but underfunded programs. As we have emphasized repeatedly, a truly comprehensive program must include additional investments in health and nutrition, as well as in education and training. We confine our budgetary discussions to the latter programs which have been the primary focus of the Commission's inquiry. One illustrative distribution of $5 billion in new revenues would look like this:

WHAT AN ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT OF $5 BILLION COULD BUY FOR AMERICA'S CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Head Start—Now serves 450,000 children with a federal budget of $1.13 billion. About 81 percent of all eligible 3-5 year olds remain unserved. At current costs, service to all eligible children would require an additional $4.75 billion annually.

Adding $1.5 billion to Head Start's budget would serve an *additional 600,000 children*. (With appropriate legislation, these funds might also be used to stimulate more states to begin prekindergarten and early learning programs and to expand the availability of quality, affordable day care, particularly for the children of low-income working parents.)

Chapter 1—Now serves approximately 5 million children with a federal budget of $3.94 billion. About half of all students requiring remedial programs remain unserved. Moreover, many existing programs are insufficiently intensive, and few continue services to high school youth needing them.

Adding $1.5 billion to Chapter 1's budget would serve up to an *additional 2,500,000 students* (at average cost of $600 per student) and permit expansion into high schools. Additional funding could support added anti-dropout programs and expansion of efforts like STEP (Summer Training and Employment Program).

Job Corps—Now provides 40,500 full-year training "slots" or service years at a cost averaging $15,800 per full year. Total federal budget is $656 million.

Adding $300 million to the Job Corps could support *30-50 new Centers* and provide almost *19,000 additional full person-years of training*.

Job Training Partnership Act—463,000 youth 21 years-old or younger were served under Title IIA during the last reported program year, and 348,000 completed their training program at a cost of $636 million. (Experts estimate that JTPA now serves only five percent of the eligible youth population.)

Adding $1.5 billion to JTPA would provide service to up to *500,000 additional youth* in need of assistance. (Additional funds should be concentrated on youth with the most severe deficits, rather than those easiest to employ.)

Providing More School-to-Work Options

A fund of $200 million would enable states and localities to expand a number of youth initiatives which this Commission believes ought to be more widely available, for example, youth community and neighborhood service, cooperative education, high school work-study, apprenticeship, youth-operated enterprises, improved career counseling, etc. (See Chapter 4.) These funds would serve not only at-risk students but all who could benefit from an enriched curriculum supplemented by a variety of community and employer-based resources.

In any distribution of funds:

- The major beneficiary programs should be controlled by state and local authorities under the type of broad federal guidelines that encourage local creativity, flexibility, and varied constructive partnerships. Top-down, rigidly prescribed, federal mandates are avoided in the interest of encouraging expanded state and local options.
- The funds should go to proven, cost-effective interventions that warrant continued investment and are in no sense untried gambles.
- Since most of the beneficiary programs are already operating in place in most parts of the country and can be expanded quickly, there should be no need to create new and costly bureaucratic structures.
- The additional funds should flow quickly to benefit children and youth who, while currently eligible for help, are largely unserved because of the absence of sufficient federal funding.

In sum, we have called neither for massive spending nor for new and elaborate programs. Nor have we proposed to send the entire bill to Uncle Sam in Washington. As far into the future as any of us can see, the vast bulk of funds for the development of America's young will come from state, local, and private coffers. All that we seek is for the federal government to do its fair share.

If we are serious about helping our young to help themselves and, in the process, to build a stronger America, we shall have to invest some of the wealth that previous generations of Americans have created. Whether that increased investment comes about through a general revenue increase, through reordering of domestic and military spending priorities, or through new forms of taxation (like a surcharge dedicated to youth), is not the central issue. **The really significant issue is keeping faith with our young and investing in their and our nation's future. We recommend that goal to all who are entrusted with the responsibilities of leadership.**

A FINAL WORD

Having begun our inquiry with a comprehensive survey of youth programs and policy conferences since the turn of the century (including periodic White House Conferences on Education and on Youth), we recognize how few truly new ideas there are on this subject. The process whereby public opinion is first informed and then crystallized behind a policy initiative usually takes many years. Major initiatives are seldom the offspring of a single author, let alone a commission composed of diverse personalities and interests. Concepts as involved as youth's transition to the world of work or of community service have long and convoluted histories. (William James, for example, advocated youth service fully four generations ago!)

Thus, we labor under no illusion that this Interim Report represents either an original blueprint or a complete plan of action. What we have tried to do is to weigh and evaluate many years of thoughtful research, experimentation, analysis, and advocacy. We present our considered views to community leaders, the general public, and policymakers at various levels of society in the belief that, just as we have learned from the labors of numerous distinguished panels, researchers, and practitioners before us, so can this analysis of non-college youth's position in contemporary America be useful to all who seek to maximize the constructive participation of young people in American society.

We invite reactions to this Interim Report as we undertake the succeeding phases of our inquiry into the role of family and community institutions in preparing our youth for work, for family life, and for civic participation.

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Appendix A

Agenda for Action: Enough for All to Share

YOUTH: PARTNERS IN AMERICA'S FUTURE

As a nation, we simply do not expect our recent high school graduates to embark on real careers. On the contrary, adults often stereotype the young as unready for the serious business of earning a living and supporting a family. We expect they will hop from one low-paying job to another, to mill around for a while until they "grow up." By not giving young people opportunities for responsible work and by not crediting the young for their struggles to get started, adults can condemn youth to a period of needless floundering that is damaging to them and a drag on our society. When problems do arise, it is easy for adults to blame the young for their shortcomings or to blame the schools for failing them.

WE RECOMMEND THAT:

- *Adults* begin to view young people as defined by their strengths rather than limited by their weaknesses.
- *The American people* strengthen the bridges that can take young people from the world of schooling to a rapidly evolving world of work and citizenship.

THE DECLINING ECONOMIC FORTUNES OF YOUNG AMERICANS

We contend that hand-in-hand with a faulty set of assumptions about the alleged irresponsibility of young people is a second set of flawed assumptions: that the American economy has enough full-time employment for all who want it; that remuneration for this work is sufficient to support decent living standards for American families and for independent living; that if our children and youth were all successful in school they would find good jobs; and that if people only would "apply themselves properly," they would be successful in life.

Instead, young people who finish their education today with less than a college degree face harsh realities in the economy. Stable, high-wage employment in manufacturing, communications, transportation, utilities, and forestry that was once open to young people leaving high school is rapidly declining. Millions of new jobs have been created in recent years, predominantly in the retail trade and service sectors, but the jury is still out on whether careers in these growing fields can ever equal the earning power of the jobs that were lost in our declining basic industries.

WE RECOMMEND THAT:

- *The American people* should set as a conscious goal of public policy the improvement of employment and earning levels for all workers, not least those lacking college education.

A BETTER FIRST CHANCE: IMPROVED SCHOOLING

At all levels, society must invest heavily in efforts to strengthen the schools and to offer young people a better chance at success the first time around. Recent polls suggest that a majority of Americans are willing to do so, and substantial investment is being made by many states and localities. Solving the dropout problem calls for long-term prevention efforts, beginning prenatally, and requires a total mobilization of resources at all levels of society, with schools in the vanguard.

WE RECOMMEND THAT:

- *The federal government*, preferably with state and local matching funding, should provide additional funding for Head Start so that the remaining 81 percent of all eligible children are served as soon as possible.
- *The federal government*, again with matching funding, should allocate additional funds for Chapter 1 in order to extend compensatory services into the middle and high school levels so that earlier academic gains can be maintained and extended.
- *School boards, administrators, and teachers* should improve their ability to accommodate different learning styles by expanding the variety of instructional methods available to students and their teachers.

- *State policymakers and school and community leaders* should take the necessary steps to overcome the detrimental separation between schools and community colleges.
- *State and local boards of education* should establish special goals for raising achievement levels and for reducing total school dropout levels to 10 percent or less by the year 2000.
- *States and communities* should establish concrete school completion goals, youth employment goals, parental involvement goals, and youth community service goals. These goals should be publicly announced and monitored in annual community-school "report cards," along with achievement scores, college admission results, and other measures of school effectiveness.
- *State and local school districts* should develop specific guidelines to direct resources to those schools which fall seriously short of their completion goals, rather than abandoning them to their failure or, as some have suggested, closing them down altogether.

BRIDGING THE GAP FROM SCHOOL TO WORK

For students not going on to college or to further training, school ends one day and the search for a job—any job—begins the next. Programs which connect students in schools with the world of work can give young people both knowledge of work and themselves, experience they need to find a career pathway for themselves. There are models of such programs, many of which have been working successfully for decades. But these remain the exception rather than the rule.

WE RECOMMEND THAT:

- *State policymakers and school and community leaders* should consider a variety of out-of-school learning possibilities which use the schools as the nexus of community-based programs and resources.
- *Communities* should experiment with multiple elements to construct an improved school-to-work system.
- *Employers, trade unions, and educational authorities* should launch serious, high-level exploration of the merits of a substantial expansion of apprenticeship programs in virtually all major American industries. This should be done as part of a determined and coherent national commitment to eliminating youth unemployment and the wasteful years of floundering in underemployment.
- *State boards of education* should consider whether their compulsory attendance laws and their practices in dealing with over age 18 students are appropriate to today's conditions and whether more flexible school completion policies might not be a powerful aid in reducing the dropout problem.
- *Local education authorities* — both school systems and community colleges—should conduct campaigns which will reconnect dropouts to instructional settings which are truly effective.
- *State and local authorities* should vigorously promote the experience of service to the community as a third element to supplement schooling and work.
- *State and local boards of education, administrators and teachers* should redirect the goal of vocational education away from specific job training to the more realistic—and valuable—goal of motivating students to acquire the skills and knowledge they need for both work and active citizenship.
- *Parents* should heed the Committee for Economic Development's call for education for both mothers and fathers to improve "the curriculum of the home."
- *Local school districts* should develop a broad-based planning process, actively involving home, school, and community members to determine the diverse counseling needs of students in each school.
- *School principals* should develop programs in which counselors orchestrate all guidance activities—in and out of school—and provide liaison among students, schools, families, and the community.
- *Schools and communities* should work together to provide jobs which enhance student learning and social development.

AN ADDED CHANCE

We have a special moral and practical imperative to assist the one-quarter of our youth who are at risk of long-term unemployment and dependency. A growing consensus of experts agree that sufficient knowledge now exists to design education, training, and remediation programs with a predictable rate of success in promoting basic literacy, technical skills, job placement, and subsequent reduction in dependency. Although education and training alone are not sufficient to cure all that problems exacerbated by a troubled economy, effective second-chance programs can make positive differences in the lives of at-risk youth.

WE RECOMMEND THAT:

- *The federal government* should expand the Job Corps, a program of proven effectiveness in improving the employment and life prospects of high-risk youth.
- *State and local governments* should expand youth conservation corps that combine academic skills and useful public work.
- *Federal and state initiative* is needed to expand efforts under the Job Partnership Training Act to target intensively the most high-risk youth by:
  —broadening the use of academic remediation as a major component of all youth programming.
  —improving the targeting of JTPA's 40 percent youth set-aside and 8 percent discretionary fund to effective added-chance approaches.
  —emphasizing dropout prevention.
- *All branches of the armed forces* should encourage and assist every person who serves to complete high school-level instruction prior to discharge.
- *National educational and other human service leaders—school boards, state commissioners of education, principals and superintendents, teachers and guidance counselors, health, welfare, and employment directors and their staffs, and community college leadership*—should actively seek ways to participate in added-chance efforts.
- *Legislatures and governors of the states* should take concerted action to bring together the full range of their state's health, social welfare, housing, employment, transportation, safety, and other human services so that education and employment training programs may be strengthened by the contributions of these essential services.

EQUAL ACCESS TO LIFELONG LEARNING

Millions of people yearly participate in lifelong learning or recurrent education, but few come from the ranks of lower-level workers, non-college youth, and the unemployed. More equitable access to postsecondary education and training opportunities is needed to increase productivity, to enhance human development and the quality of life, and to help reduce some of the inequity in educational and occupational attainment associated with race and class.

WE RECOMMEND THAT:

- *All levels of government, employers, and educational leaders* should find new ways to serve those young people whose education ended in high school or before.
- *Policymakers and community leaders* should recognize that existing student financial aid programs and institutional structures fail to serve non-college youth equitably and, thereby, shortchange half our population.
- *Philanthropic foundations* should fund a thorough and thoughtful inquiry into the question of how the United States can achieve a comprehensive, effective, and equitable system of lifelong learning for all our citizens.

MAKING IT HAPPEN: INCREASED INVESTMENT IN SUCCESS

Public funding at all levels of government is woefully inadequate to meet the education and training needs of America's young. In the past year, over 30 states have increased taxes to either maintain or increase existing levels of social services, including a broad range of youth and educational programs. It is the federal government, however, which is not shouldering its fair share.

WE RECOMMEND THAT:

- *The federal government* should increase its investments in children and youth by at least $5 billion annually over each of the next ten years.

* * *

A consistent theme of this Interim Report has been that providing a better chance for our young people will call on the talent, effort, and good will of virtually every institution and individual in our society. This is not a job for government alone, for the private sector alone, nor for parents, youth, churches, or community organizations alone. All must contribute and all must cooperate.

The following summarizes some of the tasks that specific groups, institutions, individuals, and levels of government, working together, can undertake. Young people and their parents can and should be involved in many of these initiatives. The vital role families and communities have to play in providing a better chance for success for all of our young people will be more fully discussed in the Commission's final report.

SOME TASKS FOR EMPLOYERS AND UNIONS:

- expand hiring of *recent* high school graduates directly into career ladder, primary labor market positions, rather than routinely into low-wage, dead-end jobs.
- reevaluate hiring criteria, making certain that ability to do the job is considered more important than age, credentials, dress, deportment, or diction.
- make apprenticeships more widely available, especially to 16-20 year-olds.
- develop incentives to encourage employees to work with youth and teachers as adult mentors.
- join with state or local authorities to provide job-finding services for youth.
- work with schools to provide more and better cooperative education placements for students and to participate more actively in supervising and supporting placement students, even those who are not likely to be hired by the coop employer.
- consider the benefits of offering guaranteed employment and training to students in local schools conditional on their successful completion of high school or other academic criteria.
- extend recurrent education opportunities beyond management and administration to lower level workers and develop programs and incentives to encourage their participation.
- consider establishing on-site child-care services or partial reimbursement for child care costs as an employee benefit.
- establish policies to help retrain employees who have lost their jobs due to production changes.

SOME TASKS FOR STATE AND LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS, ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS:

- emphasize prevention and improved school-to-work transition programs.
- concentrate on developing programs, curricula, and incentives which are learner-oriented, rather than primarily designed to meet institutional needs.
- support improved guidance and counseling efforts in which better trained counselors initiate and coordinate the efforts of other school personnel. Make improved guidance and counseling services more readily available to *all* students, not only to "problem" students or the college-bound, as an essential element in any overall prevention strategy.
- provide job specialists to expand and coordinate job-related services.
- initiate contact with local businesses and industry and propose specific ways in which increased school and business cooperation could be expanded.
- work with parents to help them understand and improve the "curriculum of the home."
- increase familiarity with the ways in which such increased cooperation would serve the long- and short-term, economic and social interests of business and use this information more effectively to market school-business affiliations and partnerships.
- more effectively utilize board members, parents, teachers, and administrative staff as conduits to a wide range of community organizations and potential school volunteers and adult mentors.
- develop policies to establish and maintain regular two-way communication between home and school which recognize the special needs of working and single parents.
- encourage school-community partnerships by finding ways to make school space more readily available to community organizations for meetings and the provision of special services, e.g., after-school child care, day care for the elderly, etc.
- work with parents, youth, community, and business leaders to develop specific school and district-wide goals, e.g., academic achievement, completion rates, youth employment, community

service, parental involvement and publicize these in periodic community "report cards."

- support student community service by encouraging students to volunteer, through release-time study halls, providing school-based sponsorship and supervision, allotting specific time for groups of student volunteers to talk and think about their experiences, and encouraging them to write, discuss, and otherwise incorporate their volunteer experiences into their academic work.
- guarantee free high school education to anyone, regardless of age, who continues to work toward fulfilling the requirements for a diploma.

SOME TASKS FOR YOUTH-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS

- explore new ways to involve youth, especially older adolescents, in productive as well as purely recreational activities, e.g., sponsoring youth-operated enterprises (profit or non-profit) and by providing seed-money, technical assistance and supervision.
- develop volunteer opportunities that would strengthen intergenerational connections among children, youth, and adults from different economic and social backgrounds.
- work with schools and local and state government to develop centralized career information centers. These would provide multi-media information, counseling, and follow-up assistance for young people trying to identify career interests and to locate actual employment.
- create opportunities for parents and neighborhood youth employers to meet and work together to encourage successful experiences for first- time workers.
- initiate and maintain contact with community employers and their youth workers to keep abreast of training and other needs and to use this knowledge to help develop improved employment programs.
- establish funded positions (apprentice-level youth worker, for example) as well as other unpaid opportunities within the community organization structure for young people to exercise increasing levels of both authority and responsibility.
- work with public and private authorities to develop creative incentives and substantial long-term rewards (e.g., college tuition, guaranteed jobs) for excellence in academic, service, and work-related activities.
- develop contractual relationships with neighborhood merchants for younger participants to provide needed, supervised services (bagging groceries, removing litter, washing storefront windows) in return for financial support of special community organization programs.
- more assertively initiate and maintain contact with youth (and their families) who have dropped out of school and are facing multiple problems.
- take advantage of available technical assistance to increase services targeted at at-risk and low-income youth. Community organizations should develop multiple approaches designed to meet the special circumstances and changing employment and training needs of young people from early adolescence through young adulthood. These long-term efforts should have significant basic skills and support service components.

SOME TASKS FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT:

- provide additional Head Start funding for the nearly two million eligible children who are currently not being served.
- allocate additional funds to extend Chapter 1 compensatory services into middle and high schools.
- offer incentives to state and local JTPA service providers who are targeting at-risk youth and developing innovative programming.
- encourage basic skills training and high school-level instruction leading to a diploma for all members of the armed forces during their tour of duty.
- provide increased leadership and technical assistance enabling states and localities to develop new and effective program strategies.
- encourage and assist more states and communities to establish or strengthen community and neighborhood youth service programs and youth conservation corps.

- meet its obligation to children and youth by raising funding by $5 billion in each of the next ten years to support proven youth programs at levels which will serve more eligible young people.

Appendix B

On Effective Education and Remediation Programs For Youth

Practitioners and researchers generally agree on strategies for effective learning. Such strategies work for academic learning, youth employment training, or combinations of both. Much of what is known comes from careful assessments of effective school, employment training, and on-the-job training programs, not just from theoretical studies. The assessments show what works for youth in general as well as for at-risk youth. A brief summary of what research has found follows:

THE PROGRAM CONTEXT

- INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP. Effective leadership is a key element in successful education and training programs. The principal, project manager, or training director sets standards and expectations for teaching and learning for teachers and for learners. Successful, experienced teachers have a critical role in providing this instructional leadership.
- THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT. Discipline and order are essential. Effort and perseverance must be maintained among students and teachers in pursuit of educational goals. A significant aspect of developing order and discipline is awakening the interest of students through teaching methods that enlist their curiosity and participation.
- TARGETED PROGRAMS. Programs that direct services toward the most at-risk, rather than toward those whose needs are least, show the greatest cost-benefit ratios. Programs which focus on individual needs are much more effective than very general approaches which do not take such differences into account.
- LONGER TERM INTERVENTIONS. Lasting results take time to achieve. Research on Chapter 1 programs shows that gains made by children in enriched programs tended to fade when the intervention ceased. Some young people need extra help and follow-up support for a period of years.
- STABLE FUNDING. Programs for youth often suffer from the vagaries of the political and economic climate. Unstable funding keeps programs in turmoil so they do not have a chance to succeed. Programs for at-risk youth should be supported as part of ongoing educational programs with regular appropriations, rather than "soft" categorical funds that cannot be relied upon.

THE INSTRUCTIONAL CONTEXT

- FLEXIBLE PACING. Students should be able to learn material at a pace they can handle. In lock-step programs, slower youth become discouraged and the more able become bored.
- MULTIPLE TEACHING MODES. Students not only learn at different rates but in different ways. Effective teaching provides opportunities to learn by listening, reading, discussing, making, role-playing, writing, tutoring, and, above all, *participating*. Too much of most students' classroom time is spent in passive listening to teachers.
- COMPUTER-ASSISTED INSTRUCTION. Computers are one tool that can help to make individualized, self-paced learning effective but they are no substitute for a good teacher with a well-formed lesson plan. Computers can deliver instruction step-by-step, requiring mastery of one element of subject matter before the student can move to more complex matter. Computers can be programmed to provide instant feedback, encouragement, additional approaches to learning, and analyses of error.
- LEARNING FOR MASTERY. Traditional classroom instruction does not always ensure that students will master subject matter. Mastery or competency models of learning seek to ensure that each student understands the subject matter before tackling more difficult concepts.
- THE INSTRUCTOR'S CENTRAL ROLE. Competent and caring instructors provide young people with a rich learning experience. Such instructors are able both to engage students in

group learning experiences and to help them learn on their own. The instructor's expectations are also important. Students tend to do better work when teachers expect them to do well, and poorly when teachers expect them to fail.

- THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTICIPATION. Young people tend to learn best when they actively participate in learning experiences — by doing as well as by reading or listening. Isolated learning and lectures need to be leavened with cooperative projects, seminars, group discussions, performances, and field trips.
- YOUTH RESPONSIBILITY. To learn most effectively, young people need to be accountable for their learning goals, efforts, and results. They must be helped to learn basic study skills and then should be expected to assume responsibility for following through on assignments, spending enough time on each task, mastering the subject matter, and demonstrating competency. Such accountability increases the learner's sense of power, enhances self-esteem, and demonstrates an expectation and the reality of success, rather than failure.
- A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT. All youth need a structured, supportive environment in their everyday lives, but at-risk youth are frequently denied this necessity. If they are to learn effectively, some youth may need to be assured of child care for their children, or of the presence of an adult who cares. Also, they may require health services, adequate nutrition, transportation, and even income. These services require a high degree of cooperation among community youth agencies. Learning cannot occur when someone is worried about a child, or is hungry, ill, or neglected.
- THE IMPORTANCE OF SUCCESS. For many disadvantaged youth, a sense of repeated failure may have damaged their self-esteem, reduced their sense of power, and eroded their expectations for achievement. These young people need learning experiences that ensure them a high probability of success.
- LEARNING AND WORK. The capacity for learning remains an essential ingredient of effective youth programs. Without the ability to read, write, calculate, think, and cope with rapid change, youth are certain to wind up in dead-end jobs. Youth themselves need to understand this important connection between learning and employability. Increasingly, success in the workplace demands mastery of higher order skills. When young people learn to learn, they can move from job to job as their abilities, needs, and desires — and the imperatives of the work-place — dictate.
- THE HEART OF THE MATTER. All youth have a right to understand their heritage as human beings and Americans. Whether from poor families or rich, they need a sense of the people and achievements that have fashioned the world and their country. The core curriculum of the schools should include exposure to the multi-cultural traditions of this country and others. Basic learning skills are not enough; a core of substantive knowledge is essential.

THE COMMUNITY CONTEXT

- THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION. Programs for youth are most effective when there is collaboration with various community institutions: religious, civic, and business organizations, as well as the schools. Dropouts are recruited most effectively in their own neighborhoods by community-based organizations and staffs. Program-community links help to ensure program stability and coordination of services. Such linkages help give community leaders a stake in the success of the programs in terms of better-prepared, entry-level employees, reduced welfare costs, and more involved citizens.
- ASSURANCE OF MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT. Program-community collaboration can cement motivation by demonstrating the connection between learning and meaningful employment. Community involvement in youth programs can help in two ways: Employers learn that youth can be effective workers, and the programs learn from employers what they need.
- EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS. Job-getting and job-keeping skills are vital. Job-changing skills are also important because young people who may need to leave a current job, need to do so in a responsible manner.
- PROGRAM EVALUATION AND REVIEW. Periodic assessments should evaluate all program procedures as well as specific outcomes to find out what works and what doesn't, both for individual

participants and for the overall program. This information can be used to make program improvements and to demonstrate effectiveness.

STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINING SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS FOR HIGH-RISK YOUTH

Effective programs have common elements that can increase chances for success and stability. General elements of effectiveness follow:

- Programs should offer multiple options and comprehensive services. Problems of high-risk youth have many causes. Therefore, piecemeal approaches won't work.
- Programs should not require infusions of complex support personnel. Use of existing resources and mobilization of local people as agents of their own change are most effective. Program efforts should be directed to coordination rather than to replication of available services.
- Programs should have effective mechanisms for finding and building local leadership, rather than relying on the occasional charismatic leader.

New programs usually threaten existing status and power relationships. Programs likely to succeed should be built in the following stages:

- Program developers should select a program site with willing personnel.
- They should create positive preconditions for change by increasing staff awareness and knowledge of the program.
- They should provide incentives and build supports into the system to sustain personnel.
- If program benefits are long-term and not immediately apparent, intermediate incentives and rewards should be made available to participants to help them maintain motivation over the long term.

CONCLUSION

Research on effective youth programs shows that almost all young people can benefit and achieve when the foregoing elements are in place. Such programs should be targeted to youth and take their differing needs and abilities into account. Indeed, many existing programs seem to serve youth well. Young people from more advantaged backgrounds can and do acquire the skills they need to succeed in work and in society from parents, friends, acquaintances, and the resources available in their environment. Programs aimed at these youth only need to be refined to make them even more effective.

At-risk youth, however, often lack the opportunities and the adult role models available to their middle class peers. Both the schools and training programs should target special increased assistance to these high-risk groups, especially dropouts and economically disadvantaged minorities. These are the students who register the greatest individual gains from training and whose program participation results in the greatest cost savings to society.

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Appendix C

The Study Process of *Youth and America's Future*

In November 1986, the Trustees of the William T. Grant Foundation convened this Commission with a three-part charge:

- *to find out what research and demonstration projects can teach us about how—and how well—American young people are making the transition from school to adult roles in work and family life:*
- *to determine what practices work best in bringing about this transition successfully: and*
- *to suggest additional ways the full potential of youth can be used to ensure their successful participation in America's future.*

In this brief charge the Commission was assigned an immense task, but it was also given freedom to define its work further in order to make it manageable in a two-year period. Two early decisions—to give primary attention to the 16-24 year age group and to concentrate on the special needs of non-college-bound youth—have had that effect.

The decision to focus on older youth was influenced by the presence of another study panel, The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, working at the same time and giving special attention to younger adolescents and the institutions serving them. In reaching this decision, the Commission recognized that the years before age 16 powerfully affect their later lives and planned to identify in its recommendations significant initiatives in the years of childhood and early adolescence that deserve further support. Several major points made in this Interim Report reflect this interest. In addition, **Youth and America's Future** has kept in close touch with the Carnegie Council through two common members (Messrs. Wilson and Hornbeck), by exchanging papers, and through numerous contacts between our staffs.

A further suggestion of the William T. Grant Foundation Trustees was that the Commission's efforts not extend to doing new research on youth issues. They pointed to the many recent studies, experiments, and the program evaluations concerned with various aspects of youth in a complex and changing society, and they sought a distillation of these to create a comprehensive picture as a guide to sound policy and action. They sought, also, recommendations for further research and experimentation to illuminate unresolved issues in the lives of American youth.

This Interim Report organizes what we have learned from a variety of disciplines about how young Americans successfully manage the critical transition to the world of work. Our final report, to be issued in November 1988, will extend and expand our attention to include the special ways that families and communities can encourage and provide opportunities for youth to participate in our society as both workers and citizens. We recognize that young people do not lead separate lives in each of these domains, but we believe there are important overlaps and connections among them. The process by which this report was assembled may be useful to readers and to others working in this field:

1. Working through its staff and Study Director, the Commission consulted many scholars and activists in the youth field. Their names are listed below with a note of appreciation. The significant background materials they supplied have aided the Commissioners in their deliberations. Even with careful selection and extensive summarization, the extent of the materials has made them difficult to digest. But they account, in part, for the major positions taken in this Interim Report.
2. Three scholars who have done major research on youth joined the Commission at its meetings for an extensive exchange of views: Dr. John Hill of Virginia Commonwealth University and Drs. James S. Coleman and Harold Richman of the University of Chicago. In addition, Commission members and staff have visited a cross-section of the thousands of youth-serving projects in the United States to get a valuable, if limited, opportunity to talk with young men and women and to observe special projects to

enhance their success in education and work.

3. A major instrument of the Commission's work has been to prepare working papers by authors selected for their familiarity with some aspect of youth affairs. In these working papers, the authors review available research, explore major issues, and make recommendations for policy and future research in particular areas of concern. They bring to Commission members the current thinking of able analysts of youth issues.
4. An added feature of the working papers approach has been their submission to two or more independent readers, whose short commentaries help to sharpen the issues and ensure a balanced perspective.
5. Information Papers have been prepared by authors chosen by the Commission's staff on selected topics such as youth policies in other countries. Their purpose is to assemble currently available factual information into an organized reference tool.

   Note: A listing of the Commission's publications, with information on how to obtain them, is included on the inside back cover of this Interim Report.
6. Meetings of the Commission to discuss issues and options from the above sources have been the catalyst to bring together the many ideas available in the sources listed above. The Commissioners are a group with varied and extensive knowledge of our diverse society. Some of them are scholars of the youth field; others have direct experience in it.
7. The Study Director for the work of the Commission, Samuel Halperin, and our Research Associate, Atelia Melaville, bring energy, organization, and conceptual leadership to this project. They have been ably assisted in the operation of the Commission's office by Arlette Taylor, Executive Assistant. Without these talented people, whose work is made possible by the William T. Grant Foundation, this project would not be possible.

Others who have helped us shape our thinking, and to whom we are grateful beyond measure, include: Rachel A. Baker, Paul E. Barton, Gordon Berlin, Sue E. Berryman, Martin J. Blank, Phyllis L. Blaunstein, Doni G. Blumenstock, Bruce O. Boston, Gary T. Burtless, Erik Butler, John A. Calhoun, Anthony P. Carnevale, Ivan Charner, James S. Coleman, Jacqueline Danzberger, Paul V. Delker, Richard F. Elmore, W. Neal Fogg, Bryna Shore Fraser, Frank Gallo, Rosemary George, Dennis Gray, Andrew B. Hahn, Stephen F. Hamilton, John Hill, John F. Jennings, Clifford M. Johnson, Gisela Konopka, Marvin Lazerson, Robert Lerman, Melvin D. Levine, Sar Levitan, Anne Lewis, Morgan V. Lewis, Joan Lipsitz, David H. Lynn, Dale Mann, Lana D. Muraskin, Garth L. Mangum, Edward J. Meade, Jr., Ian E. McNett, Hayes Mizell, Linda Nessel, Theodora Ooms, Cynthia Parsons, Linda S. Pickett, Janet R. Reingold, Harold Richman, Ann Rosewater, David G. Savage, Robert Sheets, Morton H. Sklar, Paul Smith, Thomas J. Smith, Leonard W. Stern, Thomas G. Sticht, Andrew M. Sum, Peter L. Szanton, Robert Taggart, Ruby Takanishi, Linda L. Tredway, Rafael Valdivieso, Gary C. Walker, James D. Watkins, James R. Wetzel, Joan Wills, Roy L. Wooldridge, Jack Wuest, and Warren Ziegler.

Publications of

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American Youth: A Statistical Snapshot (July 1987) by *James R. Wetzel*

Drawing on the latest, statistically reliable government surveys, this demographic review captures much of the diversity inherent in a collective portrait of American 15-24 year-olds. Includes data on marriage, childbearing, living arrangements, income, education, employment, health and juvenile justice. Historical trends as well as future projections are presented along with *12 charts, 18 tables.*

Current Federal Policies and Programs for Youth (June 1987) by *J.R. Reingold and Associates*

Who is doing what for youth in the federal government? This concise survey of current federal policies and programs for youth in Education, Health and Human Services, Labor, Justice and Defense provides a one-of-a-kind resource for researchers, practitioners, analysts and policymakers who want quick access to accurate information about federal youth policy. *Includes state-level allocation tables.*

Youth Policies and Practices in Eleven Countries (August 1987) by *Rosemary George*

Presents the salient features of the post-compulsory education and training policies of 11 foreign countries designed to smooth the transition of now-college bound youth into the workplace. The countries are: Australia, Britain, Canada, Finland, France, West Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Japan, Norway and Sweden. *(Includes tables.)*

Single copies of these three publications will be available for a limited time and without charge from: **William T. Grant Foundation Commission on Youth and America's Future,** Suite 301, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036-5541

Multiple copies may be purchased at **$5.00 each** from either organization:

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National School Volunteer Program
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The following **Working Papers** were prepared for the Commission's deliberations by a variety of scholars and practitioners. They are available at **$10.00 each postpaid** from the **Institute for Educational Leadership** (address above).

Youth Transition from Adolescence to the World of Work *by Garth Mangum.* **Commentaries** *by Marvin Lazerson and Stephen F. Hamilton.*

Youth and the Workplace: Second-chance Programs and the Hard-to-Serve *by Thomas J. Smith, Gary C. Walker, Rachel A. Baker, (Public/Private Ventures).* **Commentaries** *by Gary Burtless, Jacqueline Danzberger, Morton Sklar, Richard F. Elmore.*

Who Will Train and Educate Tomorrow's Workers? The Financing of Non-College Bound Young Workers *by Robert Sheets, Andrew Hahn, Robert Lerman and Eric Butler.* **Commentaries** *by Peter L. Szanton, Paul V. Delker and Warren Ziegler.*

Youth and Work: What We Know; What We Don't Know; What We Need to Know *by Ivan Charner and Bryna Shore Fraser (National Institute for Work and Learning).* **Commentaries** *by Sue E. Berryman and Hayes Mizell.*

The Bridge: Cooperative Education *by Cynthia Parsons.* **Commentaries** *by Dennis Gray and David Lynn, Morgan V. Lewis, Roy L. Wooldridge.*

What Does the Independent Sector Do for 16-24 Year-Olds? *by Miriam M. Wood.* **Commentaries** *by Virginia Hodgkinson and Leonard Stern.*

The Interaction of Family, Community, and Work in the Socialization of Youth *by Stephen F. Hamilton.* **Commentaries** *by John Ogbu and Paul Riesman.*

The Difference that Differences Make: Adolescent Diversity and Its Deregulation *by Melvin D. Levine.* **Commentary** *by Michael Wald.*

Transitional Difficulties of Out-of-Home Youth *by Joy Duva and Gordon Raley.* **Commentaries** *by Eileen Pasztor and James M. Walker.*

The Transition to Adulthood of Youth with Disabilities *by David Vandergoot, Amy Gottlieb and Edwin W. Martin.* **Commentaries** *by Sharon Stewart Johnson and Diane Lipton and Mary Lou Breslin.*

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